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**Deconstructing Chinese Online Community: Users' Participation
in Bilibili Live Stream Channels**

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Abstract

Current studies of the Chinese Internet and society describe Chinese Internet users' activities as the mobility transferred from the offline to the online world. They also regard the Chinese Internet and Communication Technologies (ICT) as liberating which support democratic development. These studies understood the power of Chinese Internet users in disseminating information but neglected the new developments of Chinese ICT. This means they have ignored the power of Chinese Internet user in consuming entertaining content. This power might become the base of constructing community spirit, which will help construct the online communities, especially the ones practising consumption on entertainment content, such as anime, comics and games (ACG). This is the research gap that this thesis fills.

By using participant observation and micro-level analysis, this thesis seeks to explain the participation of live streamers and viewers and their construction of the community in live streaming channels on the Chinese site Bilibili. This case was selected because existing studies have not told the impacts of popular live streaming and Bilibili's commercialisation on forming community spirit in live stream channels. Contributing to the existing studies of Chinese Internet and society, this thesis argues that the participation of live streamers and viewers shows the collective mobility of users in carrying out consumption of online entertaining content in the fast developing Chinese live streaming industry. This thesis also examines the role of the Chinese government in regulating live streaming sites by both restricting information provision of live streaming sites and requiring the submission of live streamers' identification information. This thesis contributes to understanding the actors of the Chinese government, site and users in the development of a Chinese online community.

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Introduction

An online community, or a virtual community, is a congregation of a group of people disseminating and exchanging information, knowledge, and personal experience on an online public site, platform or forum with using the Information and Communications Technology (ICT). The online community exists without relying upon face-to-face encounters and contacts. People who do not ever meet each other can set up a connection in online congregations, such as political activism groups, reviews on online shopping sites, and support groups of diseased individuals. The social bond circulates among the group of people who communicate with each other and “carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling” (Rheingold, 1994, p. 5).

The concept of the online community develops from the inspiration of using the Internet redefines the idea of community in the real world. The Internet breaks the bond between individuals and location, which is a crucial issue in the discussion of community, and “may extend an individual’s physical presence” (Turkle, 1995: p.20). Past bulletin board sites, emails groups, and chat-rooms provided people with virtual space to congregate and discuss different topics and content. After Tim O’Reilly first used the term Web 2.0 in October 2004, Web 2.0 started changing the role of Internet users in using the Internet (Han, 2011). Web 2.0 is a concept that ideologically and technologically allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content in communication and information dissemination. More specifically, “Web 2.0 is the becoming-social of the Web” (Han, 2011, p. 3). It means users are freed from temporal and spatial restrictions in real-time sharing and can produce content for other users rather than only receive information that the sites and organisations provide (Grossman, 2006; Castells, 2010; O’Reilly and Battelle, 2010; Han, 2011). Based on this, social network sites or social media established and became popular, such as Tumblr, Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (Snickars and Patrick, 2009; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Dijck, 2013).

The emergence of online communities is a global phenomenon. Deconstructing Chinese online community is an essential part of understanding the online community in the globe. In China, Internet users' creativity and participation in generating content are also found on social media and online communities. Previous studies have found the mobility of Chinese Internet users in disseminating information and opinions on bulletin board sites, blogs, and Sina Weibo (新浪微博 , xinlang weibo; <http://www.weibo.com/>), and also found niche communities where users were sharing their niche interests, such as anime, comics, and games (ACG) (Zhou, 2005; Zhu, 2008; Meng, 2009; Liang and Lu, 2010; Sullian, 2014). With Chinese ICT developing, Chinese Internet users also began to involve in more new online communities, which consisted of more creative topics and content. Live streaming channels (直播频道, zhibo pindao) are the rising online space where Chinese Internet users establish a connection. Live streaming is a social practice that facilitates video-mediated communication between live streamers who host live streams and viewers who watch. In the world, live streaming has widely spread. Since 2010, the Internet users widely participate in the global sites that provide live streaming services, such as YouTube Live, Facebook Live, Snapchat, and Twitch. In China, the total number of live streaming users in 2017, including live streamers and viewers on Chinese live streaming sites has reached approximately 422 million in December, which increased from 325 million in 2016 (CNNIC, 2016-2018). This participation in live stream channels shows details of the issues these users value and also the process of how they set up a connection and construct an online community. To a broader extent, studying conversation and participation of Chinese live streaming users may contribute to understanding the behaviours of Chinese Internet users in global online communities.

This thesis studies the users' participation in a Chinese site called Bilibili. Bilibili (哔哩哔哩弹幕视频网 , bilibili danmu shipinwang; <http://www.bilibili.com/>) is a Chinese site where young Chinese Internet users produce user-generated content. Since established in 2009, Bilibili has developed into a Chinese video sharing and live streaming site. At the

beginning of establishment, Bilibili rooted itself in ACG culture by providing videos about ACG. Now, Bilibili is expanding business and providing a variety of entertaining content beyond videos of ACG for users who were born between 1990 and 2009 in China and would like to express the self and make social acquaintance on the Internet (Bilibili, 2019a). Bilibili online community is a developing online community within the Chinese context: the spread of ACG, the fast development of live streaming, and other rising entertaining content in China that facilitate users to come together in Bilibili's live stream channels. This congregation displays the issues that Bilibili's users think important and the progress of these users setting up the social connection and constructing an online community on Bilibili. Thus, deconstructing the Bilibili community by studying users' participation in live stream channels will contribute to understanding the Chinese online community and further help to understand the global online communities.

I. Literature Review

This section will review existing studies about online community, Chinese online community, live streaming, Chinese live streaming, Bilibili and Bilibili online community. This section will start with listing relevant literature of online communities and Internet users' participation. Then, a review of Chinese online communities follows. This section will display some online communities and users' activities that have been found and discussed by scholarship. Third, the crucial studies of live streaming and Chinese live streaming will also include. Last, this section will also comb the existing studies about Bilibili and Bilibili online community. The end of this section will give a summary of the research gaps.

(i) Studies of Online Community

The study of the online community started with scholars' concerns about the loss of community in the real world and their turn of probing online communities in different directions. This process of turning will be combed in the following paragraphs. These studies helped understand what essential

issues and questions that have been asked and answered about Internet users' online activities.

The community is an area of communal life where the individuals, who live together, develop distinctive common characteristics in manners, traditions and modes of speech (see Maclver, 1920; Queen, 1923; or see the Chicago school of urban sociology, such as McKenzie, 1924). With the metropolitan cities developed, scholars began to lament the loss of community. They worried that the rise of big cities would destroy the traditions of communal life in small towns and rural villages (see Tönnies, 1940; Simmel, 1950).

Some scholars rediscovered the community in various forms and places, such as immigrant slums neighbourhood (see Gans, 1962), impoverished minority neighbourhoods (see Stark, 1974), and public establishments in a neighbourhood (see Jacobs, 1961). Some scholars turned to define the community as a type of social interaction within a geographic area (Kaufman, 1959; Webber, 1963; Wilkinson, 1970). Other scholars began to find communities in different modalities, such as the homeless population (see Snow and Anderson, 1993) and the gay community (see Castells, 1993). These studies deemphasized the traditional role of neighbourhoods as ecological arenas where all inhabitants compete for scarce resources on their territory. Instead, these studies broadened the definition of community with the concepts of interdependence, interaction and mutual aid, and also studied the concept of community beyond the spacial limitation.

With the use of the Internet among people in the late twentieth century, the computer-mediated communication appeared on the Internet, such as in the email groups, chat-rooms, and bulletin board services (on the origins of the technology of the Internet, see Abbate, 1999; Beranek, 2000; Berners-Lee, 2000). A question of how the Internet affected mind, body, self, and society raised. Turkle (1995, p. 26) described the culture of the Internet as a culture of simulation in which our understanding of our bodies and minds changed: "we are using life on computer screens to become comfortable with new ways of

thinking about evolution, relationships, sexuality, politics, and identity”. DiMaggio (2001, p. 325) believed this new way of thinking is a way that “the Internet would democratize the flow of information, supplanting top-down dependence on traditional news and media organizations with bottom-up sharing among consumers themselves.” In this process, the flow of information is bidirectional. People are not only receivers of information but also the creators of information. Every time people get access to the Internet, they receive information and create a new experience. It will extend people’s presence in the virtual world. Norris (2001), however, proposed that the rise of the Internet would also bring digital divides between industrialized and developing countries, between established and new media companies in each nation, and between those who do and do not use online political resources for civic engagement.

Some scholars wondered whether Internet-based communities were the same “communities” as the traditional space-based offline community. Rheingold (1993, p. 5) described the online community as the “social aggregations that emerged from the Net when enough people carrying on public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling”. Weise (1996) believed that the online social life of people exemplifies this emotion-laden sense of belonging. Rheingold and Weise both agreed that the online community consists of people’s social interaction and willingness to share their personal experience, sentiments and emotions. However, Healy (1997) argued that most online communities, such as chat-rooms and bulletin board sites, would fragmentize the diversity of the offline world by allowing participants to form groups based on similarity rather than difference. Tabbi (1997) and Robins (1995) argued that the disputes about race, social status and class that have long been in discussion in the real world would exist in online communities, and these disputes would launch more inquiries of citizens’ moral responsibility both in the online and offline world. These discussions mapped out what online community is and the impacts of the online community on the offline world. Still, they did not answer the question of whether or not the online community is similar or different to the traditional place-based offline community.

To better understand the online community, scholars probed the online community in different directions rather than only searched for the similarities and differences between the online community and the offline community. The first direction was to explore whether the online community is a substitution of the offline community. Preece (2000) and Ling (2005) stated that when referring to the intimacy between community members, the word “community” is different between online and offline communities. They believed the lack of user activity would lead to the failure of forming online communities. It seems that intimacy or close connection is a significant component of an online community. Joe (1996), however, argued that people who feel lonely offline remain the same online and people who are active online also are sociable offline. In understanding the relationship between the online community and the offline community, Doheny-Farina (1996) and Schuler (1996) also argued that the online community strengthened ties of community members in the geography-based community. To what extent the online community has affected or is affecting the offline community, however, needs to be answered.

The second direction of understanding online community was to discuss the diverse participation of Internet users in different online communities, such as online consuming, educational learning, online fandom, and online dating. A common idea achieved that bottom-up online volunteer participation was rising and the Internet users were freed from the role of receivers of content and become creators of content. In online advertising studies, Clemons (2009) found peers’ reviews and feedback on the products are now more convincing and persuasive than the push-based advertisement of products. In fandom studies, Eng (2012) found the anime fans altered from offline anime video room, anime clubs, and anime conventions to online mailing list of anime newsgroups, anime websites and anime fandom sites. Black (2009) found the online fan fiction writing also enabled young people, especially the in-school students, to “engage with information presented not only in media and classroom texts but also in broader social and civic contexts” (p. 79). This online engagement also happened in online educational learning. Black (2008) found, for English learning learners who

are non-English native speakers, online fan fiction writing provided more possibilities to express their different imaginations and illustrations. Online dating also has been examined to understand the online interpersonal connection. In reviewing the effectiveness of online dating sites, Whitty and Carr (2006) proposed that the individuals seemed more comfortable with using the Internet to disclose personal information and they might present a different self on the online dating sites. Walther (2006) found that online relationship more likely establishes in text communication than in face-to-face communication. Walther (2006) found the absence of face-to-face communication disabled online daters to acquire the physical appearance and behavioural cues of other online daters. Lo, Hsieh and Chiu (2013) also found that the deceptive behaviour in self-provided photographs makes online daters trust more on other online daters' text-based self-presentation. Kang and Hoffman (2011) found that "individuals who use the Internet for a greater amount of tasks are more likely to use online dating sites, and individuals who are trusting of others are less likely to use online dating sites" (p. 205). Blackhart, Fitzpatrick, and Williamson (2014) further found that the individuals who were rejection-sensitive felt more comfortable in self-presentation on online dating sites than in offline face-to-face dating environment, which was confirmed by Hance, Blackhar, and Dew (2018). These various studies of online participation in multiple online communities and described the footprints that people have left on the Internet. They showed the willingness of the Internet users to participate online and set up the online connection with others.

The third research direction was to explore the process of Internet users developing the sense of community in the online world and the important components in the construction of an online community. Three components were found. First is the niche topic, which is a topic only circulates within a small group of individuals, such as anime, comics and games. This niche topic makes the small group of people want to share their knowledge and to care about their quality of contributions, in which psychological ownership to the community comes into being (Chiu, Hsu, and Wang, 2006; Lee and Suh, 2015). Baym (1998) found that an online

community was shaped by a dynamic set of pre-existing structures, consisting of external contexts, temporal structure, system infrastructure, group purposes and participant characteristics. Baym (1998) believed that, with having this dynamic set of structures, participants could imagine themselves as members of a community. This dynamic set of the pre-existing structure defined the sense of community from a comprehensive method combining both the efforts of site designers/owners and community members. Koh and Kim (2004) and Koh, Butler and Bock (2007) believed that the designers/owners of online business companies' endeavours to motivate users to participate in online activities had become a key to create an online community. Preece, Nonnecke and Andrews (2004) found that the participants of the online community could be classified into two groups. One group is the active members, who contribute to the majority of the content, and the other group consists of the passive members who take advantage of existing benefits without any contribution to the community (Preece, Nonnecke, and Andrews, 2004). Abfalter, Zaglia and Muller (2012) found that "smaller group of active members or established subgroups who invest into the general functioning of the community" are easier to have the sense of online community (p. 403). These studies displayed that community spirit develops from community designers/owners' lead and active members' participation.

The fourth research direction was about the increasing influences of technology and media corporations on individuals' online participation within Web 2.0. "Web 2.0 marks the onset of intermediaries providing consumers with rapid means of accessing creative content." (Farchy, 2009, p. 361) The technology and media corporations are the intermediaries. On the one hand, they attract users to generate content, and on the other hand, they finance from the advertising investment of business partners with the value of content and users (Farchy, 2009). This means the construction of online community is no longer a voluntary activity of a small group of Internet users who work on their common interests. The creativity and connectivity of online community members are taken advantage of to produce profits by the big technology and

media corporations, such as YouTube and Twitter in the world and Sina (新浪, xinlang) in China. These technology and media corporations promote their users in cultivating collectiveness, which is defined by Jenkins as participatory culture. As Jenkins defined, participatory culture is a term that formed after the appearance of the Internet technology that “enabling average consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content” (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 1). Jenkins (2006b) believed that when this bottom-up participatory culture collided with traditional top-down corporate media, such as broadcast and television, a convergence culture would create. In this convergence culture, a technological process brings multiple functions into the same devices and consumers are more likely to search new information and set up connection among dispersed media content (Jenkins, 2006b, p. 3). This spirit of collectiveness makes the diversity of content (Surman and Wershler-Henry, 2001). However, Dijck (2013) argued that the sites had become the central force in constructing sociality and connectivity of users. Big companies and corporations, such as Youtube, are dominant in the trend of convergence culture and produce economic profits by encouraging people to make public self-expression (Burgess and Green, 2009). These studies provide valuable input on defining the significant role of site designers/owners in leading users to participate online and create a sense of belonging to the community. These studies stressed the importance of technology, business models, governance and ownership. They did not map out how the endeavours of site designers/owners and users have leveraged.

This section mainly explains the previous research of online communities and provided general understandings of online communities and Internet users’ activities in different directions. However, this is not enough. The emergence and development of local online communities provide new perspectives of understanding Internet user’ activities within their different local contexts, such as Chinese online communities. Thus, next section will comb the previous research of Chinese online communities and scholars’ understandings on Chinese Internet users’ activities.

(ii) Studies of Chinese Online Communities

On April 20, 1994, China successfully became the seventy-seventh country of setting up the connection with the Internet and became a member of the global Internet (The Internet Age Group, 2014). Since then, the discussion of the impacts of China's ICT on society began. The following paragraphs will introduce the Chinese online communities that have found and will also comb the existing understandings of academia on Chinese Internet users' online participation.

The existing studies defined the congregations of Chinese Internet users as a distribution of power or as the mobility of people transported from the offline world to the online world. They primarily discussed the possibility that the ICT pushes forward China's democratic development or reformation. Some scholars believed that the scale of China's ICT modernisation would weaken the control and surveillance of Chinese government and the ICT would be the liberating effects of democracy in China (Chase and Mulvenon, 2002; Edelman and Zittrain, 2002). Other scholars, however, proposed that the development of China's ICT was to serve economic growth and to mobilise social support for the political legitimacy of the communist state, which accounted for the strict control and surveillance of Chinese government on the circulation of information on Chinese sites (Zhao, 2001; Zhang and Zheng, 2007).

In proceeding to examine the possibility of ICT in reforming China's democracy, previous research found an antagonist relationship between Internet users and the Chinese government. This antagonism is from Internet users' dissatisfaction on governmental control of the information and surveillance of Internet users' online participation, especially when the participation is political. For example, "The Great Firewall", which was operated by the Bureau of Public Information and Network Security Supervision (公共信息网络安全监察局, gonggong xinxi wangluo anquan jianchaju) regulating China's domestic Internet use and restricting Chinese internet users to access to the filtered portals and approved content (Dowell,

2006). Dowell (2006) explained this restriction is to “create a uniform, well-behaved culture that will not make waves” (p. 114). Chase and Mulvenon (2002) claimed that China’s restrictions on Internet access are to block overseas dissent groups, who disseminate dissident information, from penetrating China proper. The dissatisfaction of Chinese Internet users also found in the lack of information transparency, which disabled the Internet users of taking part in the domestic political process, such as decision-making and policy implementation (Zheng, 2009). Chinese government’s information control and surveillance were also found when discussing the effectiveness of China’s E-government. After a detailed analysis of 29 government websites at the provincial level, Lollar (2006) claimed that, though the population of E-government users in China is small, China’s E-government improves the citizen outreach of governmental information and services. Wu (2009) argued that the development of E-government is a camouflage of information control and censorship, in which few services have been provided to ordinary citizens, and more attempts have been put in censoring citizens’ online political expressions.

The Chinese Internet users’ activism, such as online nationalism, was also discussed. Chinese online nationalism is an example of the mobilization of online public opinion (Zhou, 2006; Sullivan, 2014). When international debates occurred between China and other nations, Chinese Internet users usually congregate under online news coverage or express their opinion on bulletin board sites, blogs and more recently on microblogs where users can post thoughts, images, and pieces of videos. On the one hand, this filled the ideological void after the end of Mao’s era and his nationalism, “which is seen by its critics as insufficiently promoting the national interests of the Chinese people” (Friedman, 1997, p. 5). On the other hand, scholars attributed the rise of nationalism to the prevention of external challenges, which “is a situational matter, more reactive than proactive in international affairs”, and to avoid the anti-government and separatist movements from inside Chinese territory (Zhao, 2000, p. 2). Later, some scholars found that the national power and national interest emerged among the online nationalists. Wu (2005) surveyed on two Chinese state-owned news sites and two commercial media sites and

found the Chinese online nationalism is a “grassroots oriented, outward-directed, and culturalism-driven movement”, in which the Internet users expressing their feelings of humiliation and expectations on China’s “strives to retain China’s historical position as a respectable power in Asian and in the world” (Wu, 2005, p. 1 & p. 284). Zhou (2005) examined the posts on one Chinese military site and found chauvinistic nationalism had given way to the rational thinking and the pursuit of promoting China’s interest within international rules. Recently, with the use of microblogging site Sina Weibo (新浪微博, xinlang weibo; <http://www.weibo.com/>) among Chinese Internet users, the research began to examine the nationalism expressions on Weibo. Sullivan (2014) found that when international debates occur, Weibo’s high-speed circulation of information not only facilitates the quick spread of nationalism posts but also poses a challenge to the governmental information control. Obern (2013) examined the Diaoyu Islands Dispute between China and Japan in 2012 and found an alternative nationalism existed, which constituted of critical opinions and concerns on the domestic issues.

Other Chinese Internet users’ activism was also examined, for example, online spoofing. Online spoofing in Chinese is called egao (恶搞) and usually find in video mash-up, which remixes audiovisual and literal materials into a new piece of content conveying new meanings (Julien, Huve and Manvi, 2008; Cardillo, et al., 2011). In China, video mash-up is called spoof video (恶搞视频, egao shipin) (Zhu, 2008). Meng (2009) argued it is a distribution power of the Internet in China, which infuses the creativity of Chinese Internet users in entertaining. Zhang and Zheng (2007) claimed that online spoofing had distracted the public attention from political discussions to personal expressions, and they also claimed that the fast spread of the Internet and mobile technologies are compatible with the exclusive political domination of Chinese Communist Party.

Beyond Chinese Internet users’ online political activities, scholars also explored the influences of ICT in China from various perspectives. Yangzi and Pugsley (2010) found that there was a “Me Culture” in the blogs around 2010

popularised by young Internet users, most of who were the only child of their parents and preferred to consider individuality, self-expression and identity exhibition when their parents chose traditional collective values. They found that personal blogs are an online home for this young net generation, “where they can share views and experience with like-minded strangers” (Yangzi and Pugsley, 2010, p. 303). Cybercrimes were another social phenomenon, which caught the attention of researchers. Liang and Lu (2010) classified cybercrimes into two categories, “one on crimes targeting computer systems and information networks, and the other on crimes committed through the use of computers and their related networks” (p. 111-112). They found cybercrimes have become a new form of crimes in China, and the Chinese government was intolerable to cybercrimes with practising surveillance on the off-line Internet cafés and preventing online pornography (Liang and Lu, 2010). They also pointed out that the human flesh search (人肉搜索, renrou sousuo) was a new tool used by some Internet users to expose other Internet users’ privacy to the public, which the government tried to regulate on (Liang and Lu, 2010).

These existing studies highlighted two main issues. One is that the Chinese governments’ surveillance has consistently existed. From the political “cyber war” against overseas dissents to the regulation on cybercrimes, the Chinese government dominate cyberspace. The other issue is that, from the beginning of the twenty-first century, online expressions of personal emotions and opinions have become popular. A large number of subsidiary topics have emerged, such as subcultures and personal blogs. Chinese Internet users find a personal territory to show their individualities and emotions and they gradually become significant groups in interpreting, reproducing, and disseminating information and content for the public.

When Chinese Internet users are gathering online, some Chinese online communities come into being. Liu (2012) found that the Chinese microblogging site Sina Weibo was a marketplace for all sorts of rumours and emotions where users freely make a speech. Han (2015) analysed users’

practice on Chinese sites Tianya (天涯, <http://bbs.tianya.cn/>) and NewSMTH (水木社区, [shuimu shequ, http://www.newsmth.net/](http://www.newsmth.net/)) and found the repeated rhetorical interaction between community members by posting opinions about political issues helps shape community spirit. These studies found the willingness of Chinese Internet users to participate online, such as exchanging information and expressing opinions. They neglect the fact that the function of Sina Weibo, Tianya, and NewSMTH are almost the same, which is to provide users with the space of freely expressing. It means that users will move from one site to a new popular site which provides a similar function, and the community spirit is difficult to maintain. These studies, thus, did not touch on how community members maintain community spirit. This may be because that the topics of discussions on Sina Weibo, Tianya, and NewSMTH are so broad that not every community member has interests in, as a result of which the establishment and the maintaining of community spirit are difficult.

Chinese online communities are more than Tianya, NewSMTH and Sina Weibo. Other online communities are under-examined, for example, the anime, comics and games (ACG) communities. ACG communities are diverse. Ma and Qiu (2011) found some young Chinese build online costume playing (cosplaying) communities and share their collective recognition of fondness on anime characters. Costume playing is a practice of putting on the costumes similar to that of anime characters in anime, comics and games. Ma and Qiu (2011) claimed that ACG fans show their recognition to the self and gender when circulating cosplaying photos and experiences. Gao (2013) also found the first Chinese online fansubbing group called The Planet (行星, Xingxing) where Chinese anime fans cooperate in translating Japanese animations. Peng (2014) found that the fansubbing works of The Planet members usually circulate among members. Yang and Xu (2017) found the struggles of danmei (耽美) novel communities under the censorship of the state's anti-porn campaign in online publication and distribution of the novels that depicts the romantic relationship between boys.

The reason for the under-examined Chinese Internet users' diverse participation is that online community like cosplaying community or danmei novel community is only attractive to the individuals who share the same interests in cosplaying or danmei novel. Their activities have developed beyond expressing opinions and making debates on the hot topics of social news, which often found in Tianya, NewSMTH and Sina Weibo. What Chinese Internet users do in Sina Weibo, Tianya and NewSMTH are only receiving information and making comments. Compared to these activities on Sina Weibo, Tianya and NewSMTH, the members of the online cosplaying community and danmei novel community create content for other members to comment and consume. They are both the receivers and creators of content.

This section has reviewed different Chinese online communities and Chinese Internet users' activities. With the fast spread of live streaming on a global extent, Chinese live streaming also attracts Chinese Internet users. A new online community comes into being in live stream channels, not only in the globe but also in China. Next section will comb the existing studies of users' participation in live streaming sites and will also introduce Chinese Internet users' practice of live streaming.

(iii) Studies of Live Streaming and Chinese Live Streaming

Live streaming is an emerging social practice facilitates video-mediated communication between live streamers who host live streams and viewers who watch live streams. The topics of live stream channels include, but not limited to, chatting, singing, dancing, painting, gaming, music live and sports live. This section will comb the existing studies of globally developing live streaming and Chinese Internet users' participation in live stream channels.

Live streaming had worldwide spread on the Internet when global social media and technology companies, such as Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, joined in the competition arena in succession. It has various forms, such as sports and music live streams on YouTube, Snapchat, Periscope and Facebook, and gaming live streams on Twitch (Hamilton, Garretson and Kerne, 2014; The Online Reporter, 2016; Haimson and Tang,

2017; Recktenwald, 2017). It finds in local sites. For example, the mokbang (live streamers eat food) live streams have been popularised on local live streaming site Afreeca TV in South Korea (Kwaak, 2014; Afreeca TV, 2019).

The Internet users' practice of live streaming was examined in three directions. The first direction was the motivations of viewers' watching live streams. Several motivations found: having entertainment, expressing endorsement, having social interaction and finding the sense of community (Hu, Zhang, and Wang, 2017; Chen and Lin, 2018; Hilvert-Bruce, Neill, Sjöblom, and Hamari, 2018). Chen and Lin (2018) proposed that watching live streams made viewers feel happy and relaxed so that those viewers are willing to stay in live stream sites. Hilvert-Bruce, Neill, Sjöblom, and Hamari (2018) claimed that watching live stream creates a community basis, which expresses viewers' desire for social interaction and their sense of belonging to the live stream channel. In studying the bonds between live streamers and viewers, Hu, Zhang and Wang (2017) claimed that live streamers and viewers share group identification in the co-experience of communication, which explains the viewers' continuous watching behaviour.

The second direction was to understand how the communication proceeds between live streamers and viewers. Recktenwald (2017) studied the communication in live stream channels with a micro-level analysis on live streamers' spoken language and viewers' written messages on the gaming live streaming site Twitch and found the communication is pivoting around event context, such as Twitch's game event. While viewers quickly express brief single-turn comments, live streamers are selective in responses to the frequently appeared utterances in the comments of viewers (Recktenwald, 2017). When understanding who, live streamers or viewers, lead the communication in live stream channels, there are different voices. Smith, Obrist and Wright (2013) found live streamers take control of the unfolding gameplay and lead the communication. Karhulahti (2016), however, claimed that the leading role of live streamers in live stream channels are challenged by some viewers' prank performance and trolling performance, such as spamming meaningless comments, which suspend live streaming.

The last direction was to study the social impacts of live streaming. A trending impact of live streaming is about online political activism. Online political activists take the fast-spreading advantage of social media to disseminate information (Adi, 2015; Suh, Vasi, and Chang, 2017). The live stream channel becomes a new social media that quickly attracts public attention in a short time, and the live streaming deployed in online political activism. Thorburn (2014) examined the Quebec Student Strike of 2012 and claimed that using live streaming video in political activism is an expansive practice of media technology in the surveillance on the state power and the expression of activists' subjectivity. Another impact of live streaming is on schooling. Apart from the online classes live streamed in the universities and schools, Herron (2017) proposed that the live streaming could also be applied in libraries and provide students with a convenient alternative to access the sources, events and activities.

However, there were two research gaps. One is they touched less on the reasons for live streamers hosting live streams. The reasons for live streamers hosting live streams include, but not limited to, having fun, earning income, making friends and sharing experience. The understandings of different essences of live streaming sites are also needed. Whether the sites are commercial or not may cast impacts on the reasons live streamers host live streams. The other research gap is the existing studies neglected the fact of small online communities forming in live stream channels. These small online communities form not only in the communication between live streamers and viewers but also in the different local contexts. How does live streaming adapt to the local society? Will the different local social elements affect the development of live streaming in different characteristics? How does the communication form in local live stream channels? What kinds of performance do live streamers do and what are the responses of viewers? What kinds of specific communities form in local live stream channels in different nations? These two research gaps need to explore with a study of a specific community under one local context.

In China, live streaming is called *zhibo* (直播). It is a genre of entertainment that has become popular in China since 2005 and has developed fast in recent years. Reports of the China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC) published on March 5, 2018, claimed that the users of Chinese live streaming sites either produced or watched gameplay and reality shows, such as live performances and sports (CNNIC, 2018). They were catered live streaming services by more than 200 live streaming sites. Popular amongst these live streaming sites are YY Live (YY 直播, YY zhibo), Momo Live (陌陌直播, momo zhibo), Douyu Live (斗鱼直播, douyu zhibo), Yingkee (映客, yingke), Yizhibo (一直播, yizhibo), Panda TV (熊猫 TV, xiongmao TV), Longzhu Live (龙珠直播, longzhu zhibo), Huya Live (虎牙直播, huya zhibo), Ihani Live (哈你直播, ihani zhibo) and Laifeng Live (来疯直播, laifeng zhibo).

This scope of focusing on the interaction between live streamers and viewers limited the research mainly in the description of what live streamers and viewers did and stopped at proposing a further hypothesis that the impacts of what live streamers and viewers did could lead to the construction of online communities. For example, Zhou, Zhou, Ding and Wang (2019) studied viewers' comments and viewer-viewer interaction in live stream channels in the Chinese live streaming site called Douyu Live. They found that a large number of positive comments of viewers could lead viewers' virtual gifting and influence communication (Zhou, Zhou, Ding and Wang, 2019). This finding showed that viewers' positive comments influenced the interaction in live stream channels, but neglected that the viewers who sent paid gifts might have the stronger feeling to the channels than those who did not send the virtual gifts. This limitation also exists in Hu, Zhang and Wang's research. Hu, Zhang and Wang (2017) discovered the community consciousness enhances by the co-experience of live streamers and viewers, which consisting of participation, cognitive communication, and resonant contagion. This means a possible community spirit bases on shared knowledge and experience. This hypothesis, however, was missed in Hu, Zhang and Wang's research. They did not deploy a micro-level analysis with a

community scope to elaborate the process of how live streamers and viewers participate in live stream channels and to understand the specific elements that lead to the construction of online community.

The studies of live streaming and Chinese live streaming left a research gap: how does the small online community come into being in live stream channels on a particular site within a local context? This thesis, therefore, tries to fill this gap by looking at users' participation in live stream channels on the Chinese site called Bilibili. An illustration of existing studies of Bilibili and Bilibili online community will expand in the next section.

(iv) Studies of Bilibili and Bilibili Online Community

This research studies online community in live stream channels in a Chinese site Bilibili, which has been less discussed by existing studies. The following paragraphs will first briefly introduce Bilibili and comb the existing studies of the Bilibili online community, which will follow with the research gaps.

Bilibili is a video sharing and live streaming site, which found in 2009. Started with providing videos about ACG, Bilibili now has developed into a Chinese online site that providing multiple forms of entertainment content beyond the videos of ACG. It provides documentary, television programmes, films, user-generated videos and live streams. In the Bilibili online community, most users have a strong preference for ACG and entertainment content (Bilibili, 2019a). Bilibili is also a site trying to promote Chinese Internet users to create content, especially the young Chinese who are born between 1990 and 2009 and would like to express the self and make social acquaintance on the Internet (Bilibili, 2019a). Though Bilibili attracts attention for its popularity among the young who are ACG fans, the Bilibili online community is still under-examined in academia (Shuige, 2014a; Shuige, 2014b; People, 2016). This is due to existing studies study less about how Bilibili users congregate, communicate and construct community on Bilibili.

About Bilibili online community, there are three main study fields. The first field explored Bilibili's bullet comment technology (弹幕技术, danmu jishu). Bullet comment technology is a combination of video-playing technology and bullet comment (弹幕, danmu). Bullet comment is a comment that shows up like a “bullet” in a video or a live stream. When viewers are making comments, the comments usually show up at the top, middle or bottom, from the right side to the left side. Chen, Cao and Wang (2013) claimed that, compared to other big Chinese video sharing sites, such as IQIYI (爱奇艺, ai qi yi) and YOUKU (优酷, you ku), Bilibili was unique for its bullet comment technology and the videos with bullet comments. Song (2015) and Ma (2015) claimed that the deployment of bullet comments in videos and live streams weaken viewers' anticipation in understanding what has been told by videos or live streams. Not all viewers were fond of bullet comments in videos or live streams (Song and Ma, 2015). Fan (2015) claimed that only those users who have adapted to send bullet comments were likely to express thoughts and search the community sense by sending bullet comments.

The second field was analysing the phrases in users' comments. Fu (2014) found that Bilibili users not only create and use online buzzwords but also express thoughts with the image phrases (颜文字, yan wenzi). The image phrases are constituted of emojis, symbols and numbers, which can carry similar meanings as literal phrases. The image phrases directly present an intuitionistic expression without using literal words of viewers' feelings and opinions (Fu, 2014). This finding contributed to understanding how Chinese young Internet users express on Bilibili. The question of whether the image phrases promote or destroy the conversation in live stream channels remains.

The last field in recent studies was analysing the constitution of Bilibili users and comparing Bilibili users with Japanese otaku. Otaku is a general term used to depict the individuals who shut themselves in rooms and consume ACG in Japan (Azuma, 2009; Zhang, 2009; Ashcraft, 2013). These individuals digitised and symbolised the characters of anime figures by labelling them with moe (a Japanese term, which means cuteness). Azuma

(2009) claimed that they are the database animals, who consume the elements that constitute anime characters rather than the storylines of ACG. Kawamoto (2013) found that cosplaying is a behaviour that an otaku bridges the virtual world with the real world by putting on anime characters' elements.

In Chinese, the literal meaning of otaku translates to the Chinese word zhai (宅), which used to mean a house or an estate, to depict the new phenomenon that a group of young Chinese become addicted to spending time in reading comic books, playing computer or video games, and watching animations on the Internet (Lin and Gao, 2016). Lin and Gao (2016) claimed that zhai individuals are young Chinese who are sons and daughters from Chinese middle-class families and can afford the consumption of ACG. These sons and daughters grew up in a digitalizing Chinese society, in which the Internet and E-commerce have been developing so that they can lead a life without leaving their rooms to purchase products and practise consumption (Lin and Gao, 2016). These zhai individuals call zhai man (宅男, zhai nan) or zhai woman (宅女, zhai nv), most of who are between 20 and 24 years old, and they are well educated with certificates of junior college and above (GroupM Knowledge Centre, 2008). Lin and Gao (2016) also claimed that zhai individuals want to stay in their homes and bedrooms, to focus on the hobbies they are interested in, to keep distance with the real world and to indulge in the virtual world.

The phrase zhai constantly appeared on Bilibili. Some users put zhai in their usernames and some users make videos to introduce Japanese otaku and Chinese zhai. Chen (2015) claimed, most of Bilibili's users were young: around 35 percent of Bilibili's total users were from 15 to 20 years old, and around 45 percent are the users aged from 21 to 25 years old. These young people were curious about the Internet so that they were more likely to accept a new trend or culture on the Internet (Chen, 2015). Wang (2016) found that these Bilibili users are pursuing the community sense. This community sense builds not on the existed social relationship in the real world, but by sharing

similar ACG interests in the virtual world (Wang, 2016). Similar interest becomes the key for individuals to gather online.

The impacts of online zhai phenomenon on Chinese society were discussed. Jin (2012) claimed that zhai phenomenon was an important part of contemporary China, and it represents the needs of young Chinese in cultural products and diverse lifestyles. The individuals who follow zhai phenomenon were mostly born after 1980 when China already implemented the reform and open policy, and they more easily accepted niche cultures than their parents (Jin, 2012). Shuige (2014a) further mentioned that zhai phenomenon produces economic profits when companies creating virtual anime idols that zhai individuals may have interest in, selling commercial products related to ACG and inviting some famous persons who are leading trend in zhai phenomenon to offline ACG activities. Xiao, Liu and Lin (2011) argued that the young Chinese who favour zhai phenomenon might become isolated from society and they might not easily become independent from their parents and take up social responsibilities (Xiao, Liu, and Lin, 2011). Lin and Gao (2016) found a possible boundary between the individuals, who favour zhai phenomenon and the individuals who do not, might form when zhai phenomenon highlights the importance of personal obsession in ACG. These studies pointed out a possible trend that the young Chinese who are interested in ACG might become zhai individuals. This suggests that the users of some Chinese sites that concerning ACG like Bilibili might become zhai individuals. The fact is much more nuanced. It is hard to name Bilibili's users as zhai individuals, because, with Bilibili's business expanding, the content that Bilibili provides has developed beyond the ACG related content. It is inappropriate to name Bilibili users as zhai individuals. Thus, how to define Bilibili users needs further examining.

The existing studies of Bilibili community are not enough to better understand Bilibili online community. Three research gaps were left. The first gap is that these studies did not consider the formation of the Bilibili online community within the developments of Chinese ICT and Chinese social changes. On the one hand, they noticed the bullet comment technology that

Bilibili deploys and the live streaming service that Bilibili provides but did not examine how bullet comment technology and live streams work together in the construction of online community. On the other hand, the deconstruction of the Bilibili community cannot practise without the context of Chinese social changes. Bilibili community satisfied the needs of Chinese Internet users in personal entertainment and self-expressing under the changing context of Chinese society (Damm and Thomas, 2006). The second research gap is that the inner connection between the characteristics of Bilibili in the formation of the online community omits. For example, though Song (2015) praised the bullet comment technology facilitates viewers to express feelings and opinions, he neglected the possibility that bullet comment technology might facilitate viewers to use the image phrases often. This is due to that the fast scrolling of bullet comment inspires viewers to use more concise and straightforward expressions like the image phrases to express complicated ideas and opinions. The last important gap is that existing studies did not notice the fact that Bilibili is expanding the business by providing more entertainment content than ACG to users. It influences how the community forms and maintains. With business expanding, Bilibili provides live streaming service for users who would like to perform gaming, singing or dancing behind the web-camera and also for the users who watch these performances. This is important to understand how users build the community spirit in the live stream channels in the Bilibili online community.

(v) Summary of Research Gaps

Existing studies of online communities have understood Internet users' participation and activities in different forms, which inspired scholars examining local online communities, such as Chinese online communities. As a part of global online communities, scholars also examined Chinese online communities. However, research about Chinese online communities is adequate. This is because of new community forms within the new ICT development, such as the new congregation of Internet users in the live streaming site. New explanation of the mobility of Chinese Internet users is needed. When scholars examined Chinese Internet users' practice of live streaming, they mainly discussed how communication works between live

streamers and viewers. They neglected the fact that community spirit may develop during the communicating. They also neglected the influence of the sites on users' communication. Therefore, an examination of users' participation in a particular Chinese site is needed. Existing studies about Bilibili mainly focuses on describing Bilibili's characteristics and does not provide a comprehensive understanding of how community spirit forms in live stream channels especially when live streaming now becomes one of Bilibili current important entertainment content.

Research gaps were left. How do users gather in Bilibili live stream channels? How does community spirit develop under the impacts of site and users? How to define Bilibili users' mobility in constructing community in live stream channels? Filling these gaps will understand Chinese Internet users' online participation under the new context of popular live streaming and further contribute to understanding Chinese online communities in the study of global online communities. Thus, the next section will explicit this thesis's main research questions, aims and objectives.

II. Research Questions, Aims and Objectives

This thesis will look at users' participation in Bilibili live stream channels. There are two reasons for choosing Bilibili live stream channels. One is that the mobility of users in constructing online community is strong in live stream channels. Bilibili users have a strong ACG preference and they share similar ACG interests. With live streams emerging in Bilibili's business expanding, users are fully mobilized in constructing the community. The other reason is that the communication between live streamers and viewers shows how community spirit develops, how community rules stress and how the boundary between insiders and outsiders forms. This has rarely been examined in the study of the Chinese online community.

This thesis will answer three main research questions and relevant sub-questions. First, what Chinese ICT benefit the spread of live streams and what users do in Bilibili live stream channels? This is to understand the

impacts of Chinese ICT on the development of Chinese live streaming and to find the issues bringing Chinese Internet users to the Bilibili online community. Existing studies about Bilibili rarely connected Chinese ICT and social changes with the construction of the Bilibili online community. This thesis will fill this research gap by finding out the important Chinese ICT development and the issues that facilitate the construction of the Bilibili online community. What actions did the Chinese government take to develop Chinese ICT, and to what extent were these actions relevant to the congregation of users in Bilibili live stream channels? The spread of ACG culture was a significant issue promoting Bilibili online community. How did the ACG culture spread? What activities did Chinese ACG fans take to promote the ACG culture? How did the Chinese government react to the spread of ACG culture? Did the Chinese government support the online and offline ACG fans' activities? Answers will help to understand the background that Bilibili online community develops.

Second, how do live streamers and viewers develop community spirit in Bilibili live stream channels? The answer will help to understand how community spirit, community rules and community boundary work in Bilibili's live stream channels. It will also help to understand the bond between Bilibili's characteristics, which was rarely discussed by previous research. What specific activities do live streamers and viewers do? How does bullet comment technology facilitate viewers to construct community spirit in live stream channels? What different comments do insiders and outsiders make and how do these different comments influence the construction of community spirit in live stream channels? In what situation do community rules been stressed and what specific community rules are stressed?

Last, how to understand users' activities in live stream channels when Bilibili expanding business? This is the last gap that previous research about Bilibili has left. Bilibili runs the business for money, and no matter what free services it provides, the target of Bilibili is to produce income. How does Bilibili produce income from users' participation in live stream channels? What specific actions does Bilibili take for producing income? How do these actions

influence the community spirit in live stream channels? By answering these main research questions and sub-questions, I expect to have a comprehensive understanding about community spirit in Bilibili live stream channels and understand what actors of site, users and the Chinese government are in constructing Bilibili online community.

III. Methodology and Data Collection

This thesis will comb Bilibili's history, business model and technologies by referring to the existing online newspapers' interviews of Bilibili owners, Bilibili company overview and Bilibili's financial reports. To understand how Bilibili develops in the ACG's circulation from Japan to China, the state's cultivation of domestic ACG industry and diverse Chinese ACG fan activities, this thesis looks at the existing studies of Chinese ACG and ACG fans' online and offline activities. This thesis also analyses the public regulations that available from The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China (中华人民共和国中央人民政府网站, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo zhongyang renmin zhengfu wangzhan*; <http://www.gov.cn/>), and also studies the published reports from China Internet Network Information Centre (中国互联网网络信息中心, *zhongguo hulianwang xinxi zhongxin*; <http://www.cnnic.cn/>). This is to understand the ICT and social changes that promoted Chinese live streaming industry and also to understand how Bilibili adapts with the state's regulations on the online provision of information. These endeavours comb the key issues that influence the formation of Bilibili online community.

This thesis adopts a combined methodology of collecting data and analysing data. The method of participant observation deployed in collecting the texts of conversations in live stream channels. Participant observation is a typical ethnographic approach of data collecting in understanding the meaning of human experience and the people in different cultures on the world. This is an approach of dealing with "what people do, what people know, and the things people make and use" in different social and cultural situations (Spradley, 1980, p.5). It decodes the "acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate behaviour" (Spradley, 1980, p.6). To

successfully interpret the experience and behaviour of people who are observed, the observer would keep sensitive to the “natural” settings that the people who are observed have experience and generate behaviour in (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Here, the “natural” setting is the environment or situation that the people who are observed generate behaviour in. When the observers observe the target people, they must do not disturb the target people and respect the behaviours of the target people (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). This method can be used to collect data from people in close space and public space.

The live stream channels are the rising public space that a researcher can deploy participant observation in to understand the meaning of the Internet users congregating online. There are some challenges to the researcher to research live stream channels. First, conducting participant observation in online live stream channels is different from doing participant observation in other public places in the real world. This difference is what information the observer would collect and record. In a public place, such as a cafe or a park, the observer collects information by watching the physical behaviours of the target people. It, however, fails in online live stream channels, because not all live streamers who would like to perform behind web-camera. The physical behaviours of viewers, whose number usually occupied the most in the live stream channels, do also not show online. However, viewers are active in making text comments, communicating with others and gifting in live stream channels. This new challenge requires the observer to collect data not only focus on the small number of live streamers’ physical behaviours through the web-camera but also on the more significant number of activities of viewers.

Conducting participant observation in live stream channels also requires the observer to collect data of texts, which is the second challenge showing up during data collecting. The texts include the introductions of channels, the viewers’ comments and other literals that can fill in the absence of physical behaviours caused by live streamers and viewers. Analysing the texts in live stream channels sometimes is a big job, especially when viewers’

comments are quickly loaded and scrolled. New comments show up and cover the old comments. Live streams usually host in a certain period, from minutes to days, and once they stop, they may disappear on the Internet forever. Without the help of recording instruments, it is hard to catch viewers' comments. Recording live streams, therefore, helps the researcher to trace the literal hints that the research has lost when observing the participation of live streamers and viewers in live stream channels.

This thesis used QuickTime Player to record the live streamers' performances, the viewers' comments and the conversations between live streamers and viewers. The reasons to include live streams as the main object to conduct participant observation are because of the distinct characteristics of live streams. First, the live stream is one of the main content that Bilibili provides. The live streaming district displays on the visible place on the homepage of Bilibili, and it easily catches users' attention. Second, compared with other content that Bilibili provides, live stream produces user-to-user interaction. User-to-user interaction realises without temporal and spatial limitations. The mobile games, documentary videos, videos about television programmes, videos about films, and user-generated videos on Bilibili, however, create the web-to-user rather than user-to-user interaction. Users only obtain personal satisfaction of interests on webs and limited user-to-user interaction creates. Third, the participation of users can be easily observed in live streams. The live streamers sit behind the screen for a while to host live streams. The viewers spend the same period in watching these live streams and having chats with live streamers. These behaviours of live streamers and viewers are public and open, which can be easily accessed by the researcher.

Twelve live stream channels were selected. One primary principle of selection is the popularity of live stream channels. The popularity identifies with the number of subscribers that a live streamer has attained displayed on the live stream channels. The popularity of live stream channels reflects users' preferences in content and topic. Noteworthy is the issue that the popularity of a live stream channel is flexible. This means that popular live channels may

become less attractive to viewers due to old topics and reduced subscriptions. Some live streamers may exit Bilibili, while some new live streamers may join Bilibili and gain high popularity in a short period. Either one of these two situations may cause the viewers to congregate or leave a channel. Besides the popular live stream channels, the new live stream channels are also observed. This is to understand how a new live stream channel attracts viewers during the period of participant observation. With these principles of selection, twelve live stream channels were finally selected: ten live stream channels, each of whose number of subscription was over 10,000, and two live stream channels, each of whose number of subscription was less than 10,000.

There is also a question of what topics should be selected. This thesis referred to the Bilibili Leaderboard of Live Streams (Bilibili 直播排行榜, Bilibili zhibo paihangbang Bilibili), which showed the total number of visual gifts that live streamers received in 2017. This leaderboard has six subordinate leaderboards. These cover online games (网游, wangyou), mobile games (手游, shouyou), computer games (单机, danji), relaxing (娱乐, yule), stations (电台, diantai), drawing (绘画, huihua). Referring to Bilibili Leaderboard of Live Streams also brought obstacles. One obstacle is that, in these six topics, a similarity of gaming topic shows between the subordinate leaderboards of online games, mobile games and computer games. The other obstacle is that two subordinate leaderboards of relaxing (娱乐, yule) and stations (电台, diantai) sometimes present an overlap between the live streamers who do live streams of singing, dancing, chatting and ASMR¹. A precise classification in

¹ Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) is an experience that makes individuals feel feelings of relaxed with experiencing a tingling, static-like sensation across the scalp, back of the neck and at times further areas in response to specific triggering audio and visual stimuli (Barratt, Davis and Dahlem, 2015). Many online platforms such as Youtube (<http://youtube.com/>) and Reddit (<http://www.reddit.com/r/asmr/>) have integrated some subgroups and subscribers of ASMR videos and live streams. On Bilibili's live stream channels, there is also a classification of ASMR. To avoid ASMR live streams involving sexual performance, on July 3, 2017, Bilibili published a new notification that limits the content and behaviours of live streams on doing ASMR live streams. In this notification, Bilibili defines ASMR live stream as a kind of broadcast to help people relax and relieve anxiety and insomnia, and any misbehaviours of live streamers trying to do sexual

the topics of selecting live stream channels is needed. Thus, this thesis classified live stream channels into the following topics: gaming, singing and dancing, ASMR, and other topics. The live streams of other topics are the minority and include, but not limited to, doing make-up, audio dubbing and chatting. With this classification, finally, twelve live streamers were selected. The reason to choose twelve live stream channels is to guarantee at least two live stream channels will be observed in each topic that this thesis has classified, which will provide more details about users' participation. Table 1 lists the details of the twelve selected live streamers, such the gender, the number of subscription, and the genre of performance. The full list of twelve live streamers' usernames and channel addresses is available in Appendix A.

Table A: The twelve live streamers, sorted by the number of subscription. The live streamer is abbreviated to LS.

ID	Number of Subscription (Recorded Date)	Gender (M/F)	Performance Topic
LS 1	≈13,000 (18/Sept/2017)	F	Other topic (ASMR)
LS 2	≈15,000 (2/Oct/2017)	F	Gaming and other topics (Doing Make-up/Chatting)
LS 3	≈33,000 (11/Oct/2017)	M	Gaming
LS 4	≈45,000 (18/Sept/2017)	F	Singing
LS 5	≈60,000 (20/Sept/2017)	F	Other topic (ASMR)
LS 6	≈7,1000 (18/Sept/2017)	M	Other topic (Audio dubbing)
LS 7	≈139,000 (18/Sept/2017)	F	Singing and dancing

performance will be prohibited in doing live streams, and their channels will be closed by Bilibili (Bilibili, 2017a). This notification appealed to the Notice of the Ministry of Culture on Issuing the Measures for the Administration of Cyber Performance Business Operations (文化部关于印发《网络表演经营活动管理办法》的通知, wenhuabu guanyu yinfa <wangluo biaoyan jingying huodong guanli banfa> de tongzhi) that outlined by the Ministry of Culture (文化部, wenhuabu) on December 2, 2016. In this notice, sexual performances are forbidden, and the online platforms that provide space for these performances to spread will be regulated and penalized by relevant administrative department at the local level or state level.

LS 8	≈163,000 (3/Oct/2017)	F	Other topic (Doing Make-up)
LS 9	≈182,000 (18/Sept/2017)	F	Other topic (Drawing)
LS 10	≈262,000 (21/Sept/2017)	F	Singing and other topic (Chatting)
LS 11	≈264,000 (18/Sept/2017)	M	Gaming
LS 12	≈327,000 (11/Oct/2017)	M	Gaming

The time arrangement for observing was as follows. This thesis takes a short period doing observation. The whole participant observation started on August 23, 2017, and ended on January 29, 2018. Because the popularity of a live stream channel is flexible for the reasons described in the previous paragraphs, the selected live stream channels may not exist for a long time. This means a long-lasting participant observation is not practical. Moreover, the participation of live streamers and viewers creates a large number of data in live streams, such as the data in forms of audios, images, and text. These forms of data provide elaborate information about the participation of live streamers and viewers, and these data take time to read and analyse.

In the period of participant observation, the time that spent on watching each live stream channel was flexible. This is because the selected twelve live streamers had different live streaming timetables. Some of them may collide and some may not. A flexible time arrangement of watching these live streams is needed to avoid the situation when more than two live streamers hosting live streams at the same time, the observation and recording cannot work in two channels. This thesis took seven days on watching one live stream channel. An average of one hour was spent at each time. When the live stream finished earlier than one hour, the observation accordingly ended earlier. When the live stream lasted longer than one hour, the observation continued until it stopped. The participant observation was mostly conducted in the afternoons or evenings in Chinese time zone when most Bilibili users were active.

Becoming a member of viewers in live stream channels and join the conversation between live streamers and viewers were necessary during participant observation. This action was taken not for casting the observer's influences on the discourse of the conversations between live streamers and viewers. It was for better understanding the issues and topics that live streamers and viewers talked. Asking live streamers or viewers questions about online words and topics was practised only in the situation when I could not understand the words and topics in the conversation.

The method of micro-level analysis was used to analyse the data. The data classified into two parts. One part is the information about live streamers. This includes the channel introductions of twelve live streamers that displayed at the bottom of each live stream channel and their various genres of performance. The other part is the viewers' comments and their gifting behaviours. These two parts of data were analysed to answer the question of what elements and issues occurred have contributed to the construction of community spirit in live stream channels on Bilibili. Thus, only the data concerned with the building of community spirit forms in live stream channels were selected to discuss in this thesis.

This thesis also attempted to discuss the infrastructural influences of Bilibili owners/designers. It was disclosed in their Quarter Investor Presentations and Earnings Release Reports (in English) published in 2018 on Bilibili site. Bilibili's Quarter Investor Presentations and Earnings Release Reports listed Bilibili's business plan, Bilibili's revenue constitutions and Bilibili's highly valued services. These help to understand the influences of Bilibili's owners or site designers on Bilibili community building. The Quarter Investor Presentations and Earnings Release Reports will also be deployed in this thesis when discussing Bilibili's live streaming service.

This thesis will also introduce my attending of Bilibili annual offline activity—the Bilibili World 2017, which held on July 21-23, 2017. Bilibili World is an offline exhibition annually organized to display Bilibili online community

culture. Only Bilibili users can buy the tickets. On the one hand, Bilibili World displays the issues that the Bilibili company owners think relate to Bilibili online community culture. On the other hand, Bilibili World is the place for users to display their ACG interests and hobbies to their peers who are also ACG fans in the real world. Attending Bilibili World is an opportunity to have a closer look at this community culture and Bilibili users in real world rather than only in the online live stream channels. With this purpose, I attended Bilibili World 2017 on July 22, 2017, at Shanghai ICBC World EXPO Exhibition and Convention Centre (上海工银中心上海世博展览馆, shanghai gongyin zhongxin shanghai shibo zhanlanguan). This thesis uses the findings from Bilibili World 2017 to deepen the understandings of Bilibili business plan, online community culture and Bilibili users.

IV. Argument and Contribution

This thesis is an ethnographic research of understanding the mobility of Chinese Internet users. By referring to the examples of users' participation in live stream channels on the Chinese site Bilibili, this thesis argues that the participation of live streamers and viewers shows the collective mobility of carrying out consumption on entertaining content and constructing community spirit rather than the mobility of promoting democratic development. The developing Chinese ICT about live streaming and other important issues, such as the spread of ACG culture, facilitates this mobility. The Chinese government also led this mobility to promote economic growth. With discussing these actors of users, site, and government, this thesis contributes to understanding the process of a particular community with ACG culture and other entertaining content forming in live stream channels under the Chinese context. It also contributes to understanding the Chinese online community under the context of globally spread live streaming.

V. Chapters Overview

Chapter One will claim the meaning of understanding how the online community constructs on Bilibili. Chapter One will provide an overall view of Bilibili and its live streaming service, which will start with an introduction of

Bilibili's history, business model and technologies. The issues that influence the development of Bilibili online community will include. These issues include the ACG's circulation from Japan to China, the state's cultivation of domestic ACG industry, the diverse online and offline ACG fan activities, the state's regulation on sites' online provision of information, and the representative components that have developed beyond the anime on Bilibili, such as mobile games, video mash-ups, and live streams. With these issues, Bilibili has developed into a Chinese site providing multiple entertainment content for users and encouraging users to generate creative content. The live streaming is a service of Bilibili that enables users to generate creative content. It rooted in the fast-developing Chinese live streaming industry, which was facilitated by the lower cost of accessing the Internet, the overwhelming market of smartphones sales, the spread of third-party online payment and mobile payment, and the popularity of gifting on live streaming sites.

Chapter Two and Chapter Three will analyse the different participation of live streamers and viewers. Chapter Two will explain live streamers' various strategies of self-branding and claim that the live streamer is a leading role in live stream channels. Chapter Two will also claim that live streamers' recognition of ACG culture and their acknowledgement to the cuteness. Live streamers also did self-branding. The text strategy and performance strategy were used to attract new viewers and attain old viewers. The text strategy is to use the self-introduction and tags to impress viewers. The performance strategy is that the live streamers hosting live streams with or without a routine, which is the performance that the live streamer is good at or frequently make in channels. The use of ACG-related elements also helps live streamers to attract and attain the viewers who are interested in ACG. These two kinds of self-branding strategies will be specifically illustrated with examples in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three will claim that different groups of viewers have different activities, which bring different influences to live stream channels. While live streamers are the creators of content, the viewers are the receivers. Their responses and comments to the live streamers' performances are important in

mastering whether the self-branding strategies of live streamers are practical and how viewers contribute to the construction of the community. Chapter Three will illustrate the participation of viewers in constructing Bilibili online community by referring to Bilibili's virtual gift system and comment etiquette. In Chapter Three, the viewers will be classified into three groups: the passers-by (路人, luren), subscribers (粉丝, fensi), and on-board subscribers (船员, chuanyuan). The passers-by are the viewers who do not subscribe to the channels. The subscribers are the viewers who come to the channel, watch live streamers' performances and subscribe to this live stream channel. The subscribers can enjoy privileges provided by the live streamers and apply for the roles of channel administrators to help live streamers managing the channels. The on-board subscribers are the group of viewers who buy the tickets of Big Voyage (大航海, da hanghai). Big Voyage (大航海, da hanghai) is a gift system (道具系统, daoju xitong) outlined by Bilibili on October 19, 2016, to improve the income of live streamers. The viewers who buy the tickets of Big Voyage are named the on-board subscribers. These three groups of viewers have different kinds of participation in live stream channels: while passers-by troll and violate the comment etiquette in live stream channels, the subscribers and on-board subscribers respect and support live streamers.

Chapter Four is the chapter to introduce the findings attained from my attending of Bilibili World 2017. Chapter Four will claim that there was a possible collision between Bilibili's community-oriented entertainment consumption and participants' individual-oriented attendance, which led to the lack of mutual communication between participants and the deficient community spirit. This chapter will start with an introduction of the layout of Bilibili World 2017 and then will illustrate four findings of Bilibili community culture and Bilibili users. These findings include brand promotions, the deficient communication between attendees, attendees' practising consumption on entertainment products and participants' multiple performances. These findings will explain with specific examples and photos.

The conclusion will draw after Chapter Four, which will locate all the claims in the broader literature of Chinese Internet and society and the Chinese online community. The conclusion will also highlight a comprehensive understanding of the actors of users, Bilibili site and the government in the building of community in Bilibili live stream channels. The conclusion will claim that live stream channels emerge as the new online public space that young Chinese Internet users congregate and construct an online community with similar interests in entertainment content. In Bilibili's live stream channels, they share the same interests and hobbies, find a community and spend time in maintaining the community. Their participation displays the collective mobility of Chinese Internet users in practising entertainment consumption on the Internet rather than the force that pushing forward the democratic developments. The conclusion will also claim that although the Chinese government is strict in the surveillance of information circulation, the antagonist relationship between Chinese Internet users and government that suggested by previous literature is hard to find on Bilibili.

Chapter One: Bilibili, ACG Culture, and Chinese Live Streaming

At present, online video sharing and live streaming sites are competing for users. There are several big video sharing sites, such as Tencent Video (腾讯视频, tengxun shipin), YOUKU (优酷), Tudou (土豆网, tudouwang) and PPTV (PP 视频, PP shipin). They provide television programmes, documentary films and films for users to watch. There are more than 200 live streaming sites compete for users, such as YY Live (YY 直播, YY zhibo), Momo Live (陌陌直播, momo zhibo) and Douyu Live (斗鱼直播, douyu zhibo), as mentioned in the Introduction. Bilibili is one of the developing online video sharing and live streaming sites. This chapter will claim that both ACG culture and live streaming are important on Bilibili and they attract users to engage in Bilibili online community. To explain this, this chapter will first introduce Bilibili's history, business model and technologies. An introduction of the symbolic elements of Bilibili community culture will be given. Then, this chapter will introduce the elements and issues that promoted the spread of ACG culture in China. This chapter will also introduce the development of Chinese live streaming and Bilibili live streaming service. This chapter will end with claiming that Bilibili is an apparatus of participatory culture that caters various interests to its users.

1.1 About Bilibili

On March 28, 2018, Chen Rui (陈睿), who is Bilibili Chairman of the Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer, stood in the hall of the NASDAQ Stock Exchange in the United States and announced Bilibili listing on the NASDAQ Stock Exchange (Chen, 2018). It is a big step for Bilibili. Bilibili is a Chinese video sharing and live streaming site with running a business of providing full-spectrum entertainment content to Chinese young people who were born between 1990 and 2009 (Bilibili, 2019a). Full-spectrum entertainment includes ACG, videos and live streams (Bilibili, 2019a). Based on the company overview, financial reports and newspapers, this section will mainly introduce Bilibili's history, business model and video-playing technology.

(i) Bilibili History

On June 26, 2009, Xu Yi (徐逸) established an ACG video site called Mikufans, which was later changed the name to Bilibili. These two names, Mikufans and Bilibili, are relevant to anime. The former word Mikufans means the fans of Miku, whose full name is Hatsune Miku. Hatsune Miku is the name of a female anime character, which was created by Crypton Future Media in March of 2017 in Hokkaido, Japan (Crypton Future Media, 2007). The latter word Bilibili is from the Japanese anime called *A Certain Scientific Railgun*. In this anime, Bilibili is a word describing the sound of thunder and lightning that the anime character Misaka Mikoto makes (Project-Railgun, 2009). Mikufans and Bilibili show this online site was about anime at the beginning of its foundation. Besides, Bilibili's promotion sentence, "Biilbili, cheers", calls Chinese ACG fans to come together. "Biilbili, cheers" first showed up in the video of Bilibili 2012 New Year Festival Online Ceremony (哔哩哔哩 2012 拜年祭, bilibili 2012 bainianji). Bilibili and some Bilibili users, who were music video makers, created this video. At the end of this video, there was a song named "Cheers" (干杯, ganbei) sung by the music video makers, in which "Biilbili, cheers" appeared at the first time. In this video, "Biilbili, cheers" appeared in the following sentences: cheers, let us get rid of worries (干杯, 大笑着送走烦恼; ganbei, daxiaozhe songzou fannao); cheers, you are not alone (干杯, 不再一个人咆哮; ganbei, buzai yigeren paoxiao); cheers, have a rest when you are tired (干杯, 累了便停下休息; ganbei, leile bian tingxia xiuxi); cheers, find the magic around you (干杯, 发现身边的奇迹; ganbei, faxian shenbiande qiji) (Bilibili, 2012). These sentences show Bilibili is a big family of ACG fans, where the users will not feel alone and can attain energy when they are tired, because "Bilibili is the charger of your energy" (bilibili, 元气的电力; bilibili, yuanqide dianli) (Bilibili, 2012).

Bilibili has experienced two stages and now is in the third stage. The first stage is, at the beginning of establishment, Bilibili was a fan activity rather than a commercial company. In 2009, Xu Yi established Mikufans with other four staff. Xu is an ACG fan and was used to watching anime on AcFun

(<http://www.acfun.cn/>). AcFun is a Chinese video site established in 2008 providing anime. In 2008, AcFun was the leading site provided videos about ACG for Chinese ACG fans and there was no alternative site. AcFun, however, frequently broke down, and the users often reported being unable to open the site and watch videos. With AcFun so unstable, Xu decided to establish a similar but more stable site for Chinese ACG fans (Chen, 2015). As Xu founded Mikufans in 2009, many Chinese ACG fans flooded into Mikufans. Xu later decided to turn Mikufans into a formal video site (Chen, 2015). The name, Mikufans, consists the name of the anime character Hatsune Miku, which would bring the charge of copyright infringement. Probably to avoid being charging of the copyright infringement, Mikufans changed the name to Bilibili in January of 2010. Xu served as Bilibili director and president henceforward (Bilibili, 2018a).

In 2011, Bilibili established a commercial company to back up its development, which showed that Bilibili was no longer a product of fan activity. The company was called Hangzhou Huandian Technology Company (杭州幻电科技有限公司, Hangzhou huandian keji youxian gongsi). It registered in Hangzhou in 2011. This company only served and invested Bilibili (PEdaily, 2011). In February of 2013, Hangzhou Huandian Technology Company moved to Shanghai (上海) Zhangjiang Hi-Tech District (张江高科技园区, zhangjiang gaokeji yuanqu) and changed the name into Shanghai Magic Electric Information Technology Company (上海幻电信息科技有限公司, shanghai huandian xinxi keji youxian gongsi). In 2014, to expand the company, Shanghai Magic Electric Information Technology Company moved again and finally settled down at No. 485 Zhengli Road (政立路 485 号, zhenglilu 485 hao), Yangpu District (杨浦区, yangpuqu) in Shanghai, as Figure 1.1 shows.

Figure 1.1: Shanghai Magic Electric Information Technology Company locates at No. 485 Zhengli Road, Yangpu Distrcit in Shanghai, taken on October 15, 2018. In this photo, the statue is named Little Television (小电视, xiaodianshi), which is one of Bilibili’s representative anime images.



Now, Bilibili is in the third stage, the stage of business expanding. From 2013 to 2018, Bilibili was preparing to list on the NASDAQ Stock Exchange in the United States. Two issues illustrate this expansion. First, before listing on the NASDAQ Stock Exchange on March 28, 2018, Bilibili has prepared several rounds of financing. In October 2013, Bilibili started the first round financing and received investment from International Data Group (IDG), which is a Chinese owned and worldwide sited media, data and marketing services company (Wangyi Technology, 2014; International Data Group, 2019). At the same time, Bilibili opened an offshore subsidiary company in the Cayman Islands and outlined a targeted prospectus of attracting a maximum of 2.457 billion RMB investments, which was around 40 million US dollars² (Bilibili, 2018b). One year later, in October of 2014, Bilibili successfully received investment from IDG, the Chinese venture capital company Qiming Venture Partners (启明创投, qiming chuangtou) and individual investor named Feng Li (李丰) who used to work for IDG (ITJUZI, 2014). In 2015, Bilibili completed the third and fourth rounds of financing and received more than CNY 1.7 billion investment from domestic investors and companies (ITJUZI, 2015; Hunfool, 2017). The total financing reached the initial target of CNY 2.457 billion that Bilibili set in 2013. After financing, on March 18, 2018, Bilibili announced successfully listing on the NASDAQ Stock Exchange.

² The currency calculation was according to the rate published by China Foreign Exchange Trading System and National Interbank Funding Centre (中国外汇交易中心, zhongguo waihui jiaoyi zhongxin) on October 31, 2013, in which 1 dollar≈6.1425 RMB (China Foreign Exchange Trading System and National Interbank Funding Centre, 2013).

The second important issue illustrates the Bilibili business expanding is the personnel changes. On the one hand, the increased number of employees shows that Bilibili has the ambition in expanding its company. The total number of employees has increased from 4 to 1,903 from June 26, 2009, to December 31, 2017 (Bilibili, 2018c). On the other hand, the process of Bilibili listing on the NASDAQ Stock Exchange was accelerated by Chen Rui's (陈睿) inauguration to the Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer. Before joining Bilibili, Chen was a co-operative initiator in Cheetah Mobile Inc (猎豹移动, liebao yidong), which is a Chinese mobile Internet company, and he has fifteen years working experience in the Internet and technology sector in China (Midnight Press, 2018). Chen is also a Bilibili user and invested in Bilibili in 2011 (Midnight Press, 2018). In November of 2014, Chen joined Bilibili as the Board of Directors and the Chief Executive Officer who mainly worked on the business expanding.

Chen is the person who accelerated the process of Bilibili being a commercial media company and promoted Bilibili online and offline. On the one hand, to make Bilibili known by more Chinese Internet users, Bilibili has collaborations with other Chinese online sites. For instance, on June 28, 2015, Bilibili collaborated with Baidu (百度, <http://www.baidu.com/>), which is an online search engine in China. In this collaboration, Bilibili required Baidu to put Bilibili's representative anime image on Baidu's mobile search engine. On April 25, 2015, Bilibili also set up a collaboration with Zhihu (知乎, <https://www.zhihu.com/>), which is a Chinese question-answer site where users ask and answer questions in the form of opinions. In this collaboration, Bilibili's bullet comment technology was promoted in Zhihu's live activities, and in return Bilibili streamed Zhihu's live activity for one year. These collaborations with other Chinese online sites have promoted Bilibili to a broader community of Internet users. On the other hand, Bilibili organised offline activities, which helped to promote Bilibili among university students in different cities. For example, on April 18, 2015, the offline concerts called Bilibili Micro Link held in Chengdu (成都), Guangzhou (广州), Xi'an (西安) and

Beijing (北京), which attracted an audience of around 4,200. The number of the audience of Bilibili Micro Link in Shanghai on July 25, 2015, even reached to 8000. Bilibili also held Bilibili School Carnival (Bilibili 学园嘉年华, Bilibili xueyuan jianianhua) in Shanghai, Xi'an, Guangzhou, Beijing and Wuhan (武汉), in which university students were encouraged to make performances of cosplaying, dancing and singing (Bilibili Student Committee, 2015). Under Chen's leadership, Bilibili has widely promoted among Chinese Internet users and university students.

(ii) Business Model

Bilibili provides media services and entertainment content for Chinese Generation Z (Bilibili, 2018d). Generation Z is the group of people born between the mid 1990s and the mid 2000s, who are technologically fixated or proficient, and they adapt to using digital technology in daily life for communicating and information retrieval (Buckingham, 2011). Bilibili calls its users as Generation Z in Bilibili's financial report on May 24, 2018, and these users have received an education and have basic or proficient technological knowledge (Bilibili, 2018e). Bilibili explained that these young Chinese would become the driving force in practising consumption on entertainment content in China (Bilibili, 2018e).

Bilibili's endeavours in becoming a full-spectrum entertainment site are shown in Chen Rui's managing Bilibili. As Chen proposed, "Bilibili provides an open and fair stage for users, who have personal interests and hobbies, and Bilibili is also a community, which makes users happy and embraces different voices and hobbies as possible as this community can" (see Chinese translations in Appendix 1.1). As a result, Bilibili brought documentary to the site. On December 16, 2016, Bilibili produced a Chinese documentary called *Masters In Forbidden City* (我在故宫修文物, wozai gugong xiuwenwu), which was about how antiques are repaired in the Palace Museum (故宫博物院, gugong bowuyuan) in Beijing (Bilibili, 2016a). Bilibili also invited the national CCTV Channel 9 to register an account on Bilibili and to live stream the documentary called *Force of Nature* (自然的力量, zirande liliang) to introduces

China's ecological diversity (CCTV Documentary, 2016). Bilibili bought a series of television programmes and films for users to watch. Bilibili also encouraged users to make and upload user-made videos and to host or watch live streams.

When providing media service and entertainment content, Bilibili mainly practices in three parts: the content, the community and the commercialization of the site. The content includes user-generated videos and live streams. The community is constituted of highly engaged users. The commercialization of the site is the business that Bilibili attains revenues. These three parts will be examined separately with specific illustrations on Bilibili 1Q18 Investor Presentation, which published in English by Bilibili after successfully listing on the NASDAQ Stock Exchange on May 24, 2018.

First, the content is essential for the site to attract new users and retain old users. Bilibili has various genres of content beyond ACG. For example, one of the content is user-generated videos and live streams. The video and live stream have five catalogues of anime, game, technology, entertainment (娱乐, yule) and lifestyle (生活, shenghuo) (Bilibili, 2018d). These five catalogues include ten topics: fashion, drawing, auto-tune remix (鬼畜视频, guichu shipin), dance, music, vocaloid³, documentary, history, cosplay and E-sports (Bilibili, 2018d). The popularity of videos and live streams under the topic of lifestyle, technology and entertainment is higher than those of anime and games. The catalogues of lifestyle, game and entertainment were listed as the most popular, followed by the catalogues of technology and anime (Bilibili, 2018d). The significance of content to Bilibili also can be identified when opening Bilibili's homepage. Bilibili decorates its homepage with links of user-generated videos and live streams. The homepage is the important page of an online site to impress users. Figure 1.2 and Figure 1.3 are two clips of the Bilibili homepage displayed on August 15, 2018. In these two clips, ten topics of videos and live streams hang at the above area of the homepage, and the below are the links of popular videos and live on August 15, 2018.

³ Vocaloid is the music composed by singing voice synthesizer software.

Figure 1.2 and Figure 1.3 show that Bilibili impresses new and old users with user-generated videos and live streams and Bilibili encourages users to generate content.

Figure 1.2: The clip of Bilibili homepage (a). Available at: <https://www.bilibili.com/> (Accessed: 15 August, 2018).

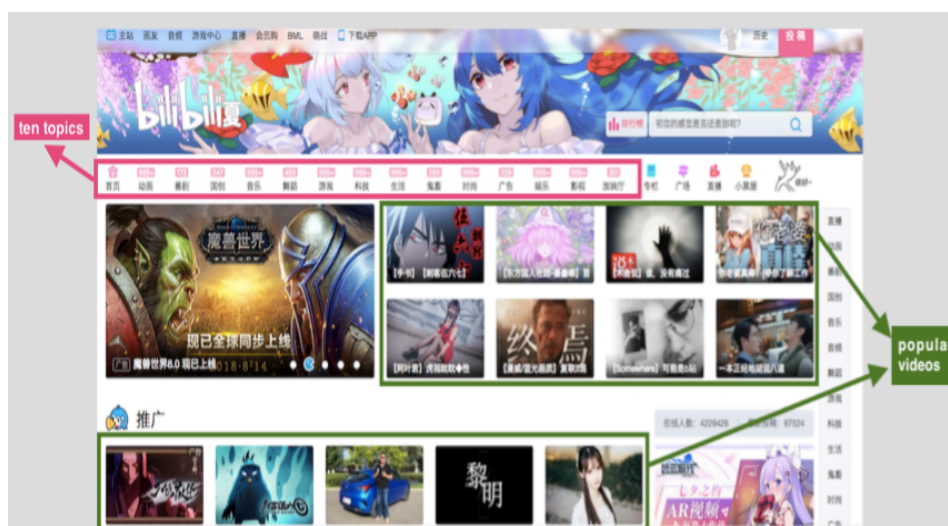
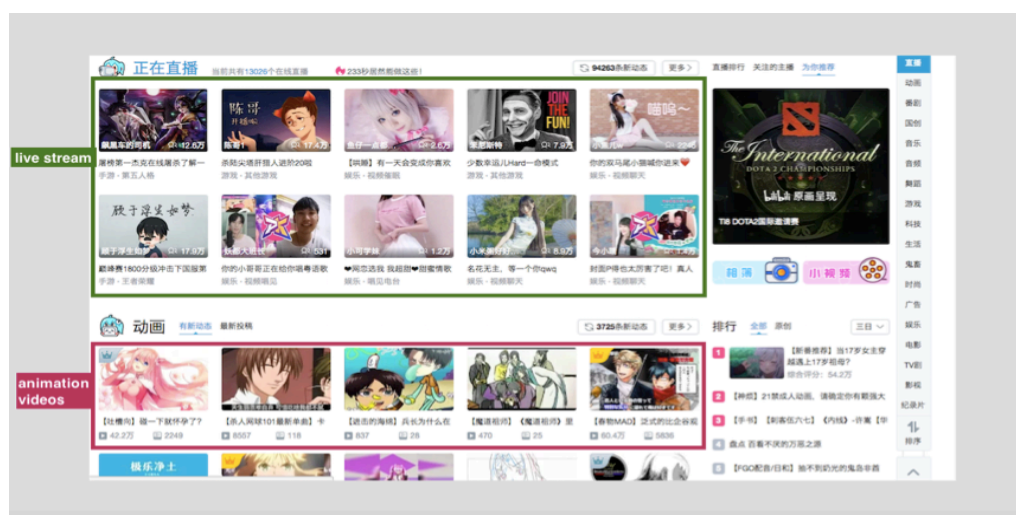


Figure 1.3: The clip of Bilibili homepage (b). Available at: <https://www.bilibili.com/> (Accessed: 15 August, 2018).



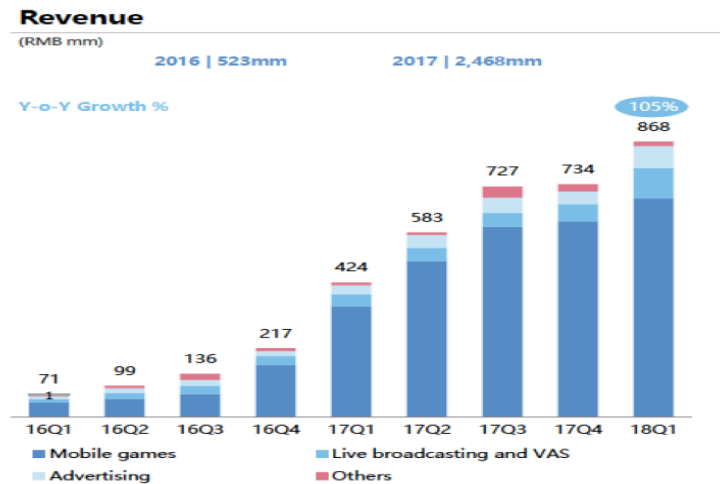
Second, the community is the thing that Bilibili tries to construct on the site. Bilibili online community needs highly engaged users to consume content (Bilibili, 2018d). Bilibili defines the highly engaged users as the users who use interactive features of commenting, favourites, and virtual gifting when

watching videos and live streams. Before becoming a highly engaged user, the users must become official members (正式会员, zhengshi huiyuan). The official members are the users who pass the community exam (会员考试, huiyuan kaoshi) (Bilibili, 2018d). The community exam is prepared for the registered users (注册会员, zhucai huiyuan) who can only watch videos and live streams to become the official members who can make comments when watching videos and live streams (Shizebeihouling, 2018). This exam includes 20 questions of barrage etiquette (弹幕礼仪, danmuliyi), an etiquette about making comments politely on Bilibili, and 30 questions about ACG and non-ACG (Shizebeihouling, 2018; Maqiu Video, 2018). Till March 31, 2018, the number of official members had increased in twelve months to 35 million (Bilibili, 2018d). The reason for this significant increase would be that becoming a loyal official member is attractive or community exam is easy by cheating. If typing “the questions and answers of Bilibili community exam” (Bilibili 社区会员考试问题与答案) in the Chinese search engine Baidu (百度), the questions and answers of Bilibili community exam will be listed. By this cheating, applicants can easily pass the community exam without any ACG and non-ACG knowledge. In Bilibili 1Q18 Investor Presentation, the high engagement of official members in Bilibili can be illustrated with the number of daily video views and the number of monthly-generated interaction features, including commenting and virtual gifting. Taking the first quarter of 2018 as an example, the average number of monthly user-generated interaction features was 293 million and the number of times of daily views was 267 million. These two numbers are close, which demonstrate almost every official member practised interaction features in videos and live streams in the first quarter of 2018 (Bilibili, 2018d). These highly engaged users are the user bases for Bilibili to construct an online community.

The last part is the commercialization of the site. At present, Bilibili's business revenue largely depends on the mobile games business rather than its diverse content and services. This will lead to the contradiction between Bilibili's business ambition and the inclined revenue portion. As section 1.1 proposed, Bilibili tries to build a full-spectrum entertainment site, which means

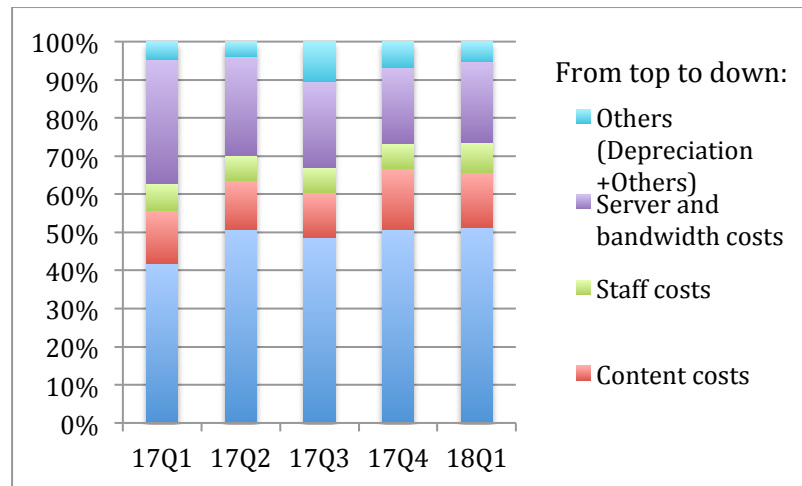
Bilibili intends to receiving revenue from its diverse content and services. However, the quarterly revenue reports that Bilibili released in the quarterly financial report on May 24, 2018, showed the revenue of mobile games business had overwhelmed the revenue of other content and services. Figure 1.4 shows that, although the exact figures were not shown, from the first quarter of 2016 to the first quarter of 2018, the revenue of mobile games has grown and occupied the most in total revenues in nine quarters. This large revenue came from the mobile games released by Bilibili. To March 31, 2018, Bilibili had released 134 mobile games, including one self-developed mobile game, six exclusively distributed mobile games and 127 jointly operated mobile games with game companies (Bilibili, 2018d). In these mobile games, there were two noteworthy games. One is called Fate Grand Gate, which is a Japanese anime and comic themed mobile game and was introduced by Bilibili to the Chinese market. This mobile game climbed to the top two in the Chinese mobile game market on January 23, 2018. The other is called Azur Lane, a domestic ACG themed mobile game, which has brought Bilibili over 100 million RMB revenue in the first thirty days since its release (Bilibili, 2018d). Mobile games are the right content to bring income that Bilibili can supply to its users who are willing to pay for entertaining content (Bilibili, 2018d).

Figure 1.4: Bilibili quarterly revenue chart from the first quarter of 2016 to the first quarter of 2018, without giving the exact number of every proportion, in Bilibili's Q1 2018 Bilibili Inc. Investor Presentation. Available at: <http://ir.bilibili.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=254699&p=irol-irhome> (Accessed: 24 May, 2018).



This large revenue that generating from mobile games business led to a large payment to the game developers and distribution channels, such as app stores on mobile phones, the live streamers who host live streams and videos creators. These payments calculate as the revenue-sharing costs. As Figure 1.5 displays, the revenue-sharing costs increased from the first quarter of 2017 to the first quarter of 2018, which occupied around 40 percent of total revenue. If Bilibili does not take actions in the future years to increase the revenue of other entertainment content and services, it is hard for Bilibili to reach the target of becoming a full-spectrum entertainment site with having revenue from diverse content and services.

Figure 1.5: Bilibili's cost of revenue from the first quarter of 2017 to the first quarter of 2018. Re-edited on Bilibili's Q1 2018 Bilibili Inc. Investor Presentation. The currency unit is RMB mm. Available at: <http://ir.bilibili.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=254699&p=irhome> (Accessed: 24 May, 2018).



Other forms of the commercialization of the site include advertisement services and the live streaming service as Figure 1.4 has displayed. Their proportions in total revenue were small but had kept increasing from 2016 to the first quarter of 2018. These two forms of commercialization of the site targeted at users. Brand advertisers chase the potential paying ability of Bilibili users, while Bilibili chases the sticky bonds between streamers and viewers in live stream channels. To produce commercial revenue, these two forms of commercialization of the site require Bilibili to have a comprehensive understanding of their users.

(iii) Bullet Comment Technology

In addition to the diverse content Bilibili provides, Bilibili also promotes its video-playing technology the bullet comment technology. Bullet comment technology contains two layers. One is the video layer, and the other is the comment layer. The technologies that Bilibili mainly deploys in the video layer of videos and live streams are the Flash video player and HTML5 video player. Flash player is the video-playing technology that Adobe created and widely deployed in many sites. HTML5 video player is a recently emerging video player enabling videos being played with higher quality. Regarding the comment layer, when playing videos or live streams, the user's comments will first show in the comment section and then shortly show on the video. The layer of bullet comment can be determined by the user whether to display on the video layer. For instance, Figure 1.6 shows the comparison of a video with

and without bullet comments. The image on the left side is the one with comments and the image on the right side without comments. It is easy to find the comments show on the video layer. A video with comments is called the bullet comment video (弹幕视频, danmu shipin).

Figure 1.6: The comparison of a video with and without bullet comments. This video is called Bilibili 2016 New Year Celebration (哔哩哔哩 2016 拜年祭, Bilibili 2016 bainianji). The left image is the video with comments, and the right image is the video without comments. Available at: <https://www.bilibili.com/video/av3521416?from=search&seid=17147618219954747492> (Accessed: 5 January, 2016).



Bullet comment technology strengthens the bond between users. Bilibili highly praised as it “constructs an amazing synchronic relationship and forms a virtual community-like video watching atmosphere without spatial and temporal restrictions” (超越时空限制, 构建出一种奇妙的共时性的关系, 形成一种虚拟的部落式观影氛围; chaoyue shikongxianzhi, goujianchu yizhong qimiaode gongshixingde guanxi, xingcheng yizhong xunide buluoshi guanying fenwei) (Bilibili, 2018e). For video viewers, with the bullet comment technology, their comments can be saved with this video. For live streams viewers, the bullet comment technology enables them to communicate with live streamers, such as making suggestions for performances and proposing

new chat topics. This bullet comment technology enables all users to become contributors at any time and anywhere.

1.2 Symbolic Elements of Bilibili Community Culture: Anime and Beyond

Anime is the important content that Bilibili had been providing since established under the impacts of Japanese anime, comic and game (ACG) culture. This section will first introduce the circulation of Japanese ACG in China by pirating and the Internet. Chinese ACG culture could not develop without the efforts of the Chinese government and the fan activities of Chinese ACG fans. Under these influences, Bilibili was established to provide videos about ACG and has become an online site providing a variety of content. On Bilibili, anime is still a representative element, and more elements are emerging. With this background information, this section will explain how Bilibili community culture develops beyond the anime and demonstrate the creativity of Bilibili users.

(i) Development of ACG Culture in China

The anime, comics and games (ACG) culture in China developed with the influence of Japanese ACG culture. Since the outline of China's economic reform policy in 1978, Japanese popular culture such as music, movies, TV dramas and literature have been introduced to Mainland China from Taiwan and Hong Kong. It was pirating facilitated this dissemination. The circulation of foreign movie, TV dramas and literature was under the Chinese government's control on the flow of information and cultural products. This limited the import of foreign pop culture and the large demand of the market could not be fed. The black market (黑市, heishi), therefore, became active in printing, copying and transporting the material products, such as video compact disks of Japanese music, movie, TV dramas, literature, and ACG (Goderie and Yecies, 2010). The black market was an underground activity that sells the unauthorized, forbidden or illegal material products that may contain elements of pornography, crime and terror the Chinese government believed may endanger public morality (Pang, 2004; Goderie and Yecies, 2010).

Besides the pirating, two important social elements also fueled the development of ACG culture in China. On the one hand, the Chinese government noticed the increasing domestic needs of the products of ACG and was aware of the importance of supporting domestic ACG industry in economic growth. The Ministry of Culture (文化部, wenhuabu) endeavoured to support domestic ACG companies in creating original ACG and ACG related products. On the other hand, online fan activities have been active since the 1990s. The Internet has become the main distribution centre for fan activities. Fan-subbing, sharing cosplaying photos and writing fan fiction of danmei novel developed. These online fan activities enabled the development of ACG culture jumping out of the frame of Japanese ACG culture and developing its indigenous characteristics, such as original danmei novels (耽美小说, danmei xiaoshuo) and fan-subbing groups (字幕组, zimuzu), which will be specifically delivered in this section. These efforts made by the Chinese government and Chinese ACG fans influenced the development of ACG culture in China. This section will introduce the process of ACG culture developed in China by putting together the efforts of the Chinese government and the Chinese ACG fans.

A. Chinese state cultivating domestic ACG industry

Japanese ACG culture developed in China within the inflow of Japanese pop culture, such as Japanese music, movie, TV dramas and literature after 1978 (Yang and Xu, 2017). The signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between China and Japan, after which China and Japan's diplomatic relations improved, facilitated this inflow. This inflow was also facilitated by China's outline of economic reform policy. Music, movies, TV dramas and other products were introduced into China (Li, 2004). The relation between China and Japan were eased from 1983 to 1992, and it witnessed a flood of Japanese TV dramas, anime, and comics into Chinese citizens' homes and bookshelves, especially into those of the young Chinese who were born or grew up in this period and wanted to claim personal identities through cultural consumption (Hansen and Svarverud, 2010).

China's import of Japanese animation influenced the boom of Japanese ACG culture in China in the 1980s and 1990s. *Astroboy* was the first Japanese animation imported by China Central Television (CCTV) in 1980. It was screened nationwide on CCTV between 6 pm to 10 pm. It followed by a series of imports of Japanese animation, including *Ikkyuu San*⁴, *Doraemon*⁵ and *Lulu*⁶. These animations were bought, translated and subtitled by CCTV. At the same time of importing animations, CCTV also started a television programme called *Cartoon City* (动画城, Donghua Cheng) in 1994, which introduced animation to TV viewers.

Japanese games spread slower than animation in China. The Chinese government worried the illegal amusement arcades (游戏厅, youxiting) might cause social disorder, which held back the import of Japanese games. Before the Internet became popular in the 1990s, most Japanese games spread through the trades of game consoles, and many game consoles were bought by amusement arcades, where individuals pay for playing video games on game consoles. In 2000, the state, however, found that "there are too many illegal amusement arcades...and there have been a lot of illegal business operations, which has seriously jeopardized the healthy growth of young people and disrupted the order of public security, and this has become a major public nuisance...needs complete governance." (电子游戏经营场所过多过滥...出现了大量违法、违规经营现象,严重危害了青少年的健康成长,扰乱了社会治安秩序,已成为社会一大公害...到了非彻底治理不可的地步; dianzi youxi jingying changsuo guoduo guolan...chuxianle daliang weifa、weigui jingying xianxiang, yanzhong weihaile qingshaoniande jiankang chengzhang, raoluanle shehui zhian zhixu, yichengwei shehui yida gonghai...daole fei chedi zhilibuke de dibu) (General Office of the State Council, 2000). In order to regulate amusement arcades, the state limited the import and sale of game machines. From June 15, 2000, the Chinese General Office of the State Council (中国国务院办公厅, zhongguo guowuyuan bangongting) outlined a

⁴ *Ikkyuu San* is the childhood story of a Japanese Buddhist named Ikkyuu San.

⁵ *Doraemon* is about the friendship between a cat-like robot and a primary school student.

⁶ *Lulu* tells the adventure of a girl with magic.

circular and forbidden the sale of game consoles to the amusement arcades. This circular was critical between its paragraphs and lines. It not only “prohibits any domestic enterprises or individuals from engaging in the production and sale of electronic game equipment and accessories for domestic use” (任何企业、个人不得再从事面向国内的电子游戏设备及其零、附件的生产、销售活动; renhe qiye、geren bude zai congshi mianxiang guonei de dianzi shebei jiqi ling、fujian de shengchan、xiaoshou huodong) but also “strictly restricts the import of electronic game devices and accessories by other means of trading” (严格限制以其他贸易方式进口电子游戏设备及其零、附件; yange xianzhi yi qita maoyi fangshi jinkou dianzi youxi shebei jiqi ling, fujian) (General Office of the State Council, 2000). This strict control on the import and sale of game consoles slowed the spread of overseas games in China, including Japanese games.

Since the early 1990s, the popularity of Japanese pop culture in China has faced the competition of South Korean pop culture and the protection of the Chinese government on its domestic cultural industry. This slowed down the spread of Japanese anime in the Chinese market. On the one hand, the Chinese government also introduced South Korean TV dramas and pop music. These dramas and music attracted the attention of young Chinese, which brought a strong competition to Japanese pop culture (Yang and Xu, 2017). On the other hand, the market of Japanese pop culture in China has been primarily affected by the decline of China-Japan relation in political disputes from the middle 1990s, such as the Diaoyu Islands (钓鱼岛, diaoyudao) dispute, which is a territorial dispute between China and Japan (Yang and Xu, 2017). Another reason for the slowdown is that the Chinese government did not think the sexual and violent elements that Japanese anime and manga have are suitable for the young audience to watch and read (Goderie and Yecies, 2010). As a result, the State Administration for Radio, Film and Television (SARFT, 中国国家广播电影电视总局; zhongguo guojia guangbo dianying dianshi zongju) banned the airing of foreign animations on television between 5 pm and 8 pm in 2006 and extended the ban to 9 pm from May of 2008 (Chung, 2008).

The further economic opening up prompted the Chinese state to notice that the import of foreign ACG may harm young people. In “Some Opinions of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on Further Intensifying and Improving the Ideological and Ethical Construction of Minors” (中共中央国务院关于进一步加强和改进未成年人思想道德建设的若干意见, Zhonggong zhongyang guowuyuan guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang he gaijin weichengnianren sixiangdaode jianshe de ruogan yijian) published on February 26, 2004, it was claimed that the economic opening up had broadened the horizon of Chinese youth but also exposed the young Chinese to pornography, violence, money-worship, over-entertaining and other “bad contents” (有害的信息, youhaide xinxi) and “pessimistic phenomena” (消极的现象, xiaojide xianxiang), which “lead a small amount of minors to the lack spiritual fulfillment, misbehaving and some even to the path of committing crimes” (少数未成年人精神空虚、行为失范, 有的甚至走上犯罪的歧途, shaoshu weichengnianren jingsheng kongxu、xingwei shifan, youde shenzhi zoushang fanzui de qitu) (the State Council, 2004). It showed that the Chinese state concern the imports of foreign ACG products might lead young Chinese to misconduct or even commit crimes.

The Chinese state also noticed the slow development of China’s domestic ACG industry does not meet the growing market demand. “The development of our anime and animation industry is not compatible with the growing spiritual and cultural demand of people, and it is not compatible with the strong market demand” (我国动漫产业的发展现状与人民群众不断增长的精神文化需求还不相适应, 与旺盛的市场需求不相适应; woguo dongman changye de fazhan xianzhuang yu renmin qunzhong buduan zengzhang de jingshen wenhua xuqiu hai bu xiangshiying, yu wangsheng de shichang xuqiu bu xiangshiying), pointed out by the State Council (General Office of State Council, 2006). The Ministry of Culture (文化部, wenhuabu) also found the lack of “original creativity, talent cultivation, technology innovation, industrial chain integration, intellectual property protection” (原创能力、人才培养、技术

开发、产业链整合、知识产权保护; yuanchuang nengli、rencai peiyang、jishu kaifa、chanyelian zhenghe、zhishi chanquan baohu) in developing the domestic anime industry (Ministry of Culture, 2008).

Since 2006, the Chinese state has been making efforts and investments in supporting the domestic ACG industry. The first was the financial support for domestic ACG companies. The anime companies who can “independently developing and producing animation products” (自主开发、生产动漫产品; zizhu kaifa、shengchan dongman chanpin) could have “certain value-added tax deduction, income tax deduction” (有关增值税、所得税优惠; youguan zengshishui、suodeshui youhui) and 3% sales tax deduction (General Office of State Council, 2006). The second support was the construction of anime industry district (动漫产业园区建设; dongman changye yuanqu jianshe) and the professionalization of animation talents (动漫人才职业化; dongman rencai zhiyehuahua). The Ministry of Culture incorporated the professionalization of animation talents into the plan of cultivating national art and culture professions (国家文化艺术类人才培养规划, guojia wenhua yishulei renlai peiyang guiha) and also required the local government at the province and the city level to build and manage local animation industry bases (动漫产业基地, dongman changye jide) (Ministry of Culture, 2008).

The response of the local government to the state’s requirement on constructing local anime industry was positive. The state and local governments cooperated in organising animation festivals. For example, China International Cartoon and Animation Festival (中国国际动漫节, zhongguo guoji dongmanjie) is the national animation and cartoon festival supported by State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, and it was organized by the Hangzhou (杭州) local government. It was listed as one of the major cultural exhibition programmes in the State’s Eleventh Five-Year Plan (十一五规划, shiyiwu guiha) and Twelfth Five-Year Plan (十二五规划, shi’erwu guiha) (China International Cartoon and Animation Festival, 2015). This animation festival exclusively exhibits the

national animations and cartoons that created with the supports of the state and local governments. The local governments also positively organise and support ACG exhibitions and events. For example, in Shanghai (上海), the China International Cartoon and Game Expo (CCG EXPO, 中国国际动漫游戏博览会, zhongguo guoji dongman youxi bolanhui), ChinaJoy—China Digital Entertainment Expo and Conference (ChinaJoy 中国国际数码互动娱乐展览会, ChinaJoy zhongguo guoji shuma hudong yule zhanlanhui) and ComiCon Fan Fiction Exhibition (ComiCon 同人展, ComiCon tongren zhan) were supported by Shanghai local government (CCG EXPO, 2018; ChinaJoy, 2018; ComiCon, 2011). In Chengdu (成都), there are some popular comic exhibitions annually held, such as Comiday (成都同人祭, Chengdu tongren ji) and Chengdu ACG Fair (成都卡弗动漫游戏展, chengdu kafu dongmanzhan), which are supported by the Chengdu government (Comiday, 2018; Chengdu ACG Fair, 2015).

B. Online and offline ACG fan activities

The strict regulations of the Chinese state in importing foreign ACG did not prevent the Chinese fans from liking Japanese ACG culture. The high-speed Internet has made it easy for the Chinese fans of Japanese ACG culture to publish or read ACG information on the Internet. Some of these fans voluntarily organised fan-subbing groups (字幕组, zimuzu). Chinese fans, who know Japanese and are willing to voluntarily translate Japanese dramas, anime, comics, manga and other Japanese pop culture into China, organised the fan-subbing group. Fan-subbing groups usually translate and add subtitles quickly. Once the latest episode of a Japanese drama or anime aired in Japan, the Chinese fan-subbing groups will translate it into Chinese in a few days or even hours and upload it to the Internet. The first Chinese fan-subbing group translating Japanese anime was called The Planet (行星, Xingxing) (Peng, 2014). The most famous Japanese anime that The Planet members have translated was *Gundam*, which is a Japanese animation about the wars between robots. They translated *Gundam* into Chinese episode by the episode when *Gundam* was aired in Japan (Gao, 2013). Fan-subbing groups like The Planet provide Chinese fans with an alternative way to access

Japanese anime. This fan activity attracted the attention of Chinese online video sharing sites, such as Tudou (土豆网, tudouwang), PPTV (PP 视频, PP shipin) and YOUKU (优酷). These sites have purchased the copyrights of some Japanese anime series and provided them to users free (China International Comic Net, 2012; Yang and Xu, 2017).

Chinese fans of Japanese ACG culture were also engaged in other fan activities. For example, cosplaying is a practice of fans wearing anime costumes and posing gestures similar to anime characters. This is the behaviour of consuming anime database. It is carried out by costume player extracting elements from female anime characters (Azuma, 2009). Cosplayers mimic the character's personality during cosplaying and express their understandings of anime characters (Ogonoski, 2014). Fans who are engaged in cosplaying use the Internet to attract viewers, share photos and form cosplaying groups. For example, the all-male cosplay group AC Fake Girl Group (AC 爱丽丝伪娘团, AC ailisi weiniang tuan) usually publishes their members' performance information and cosplay photos on Sina Weibo (Chao, 2017).

Danmei novel (耽美小说, danmei xiaoshuo) is another popular fan activity that benefits from the anonymity of the Internet. The Chinese term, danmei (耽美), developed from the phrase tanbi in Japanese manga in the 1970s, which means boys' love. Boys' love is a male-to-male same-sex romantic relationship that is most popular among female fans (McLelland, 2009; Yang and Xu, 2017). The boys' love culture was introduced to China in the 1990s through the pirated Japanese boys' love comics and manga. Tanbi was given the Chinese name danmei, and danmei means that the person addicted to male's beauty (Wang, 2005). Danmei culture first circulated among Chinese fans, and from 2000, it developed on the Internet. The anonymity of the Internet has facilitated the writers and readers of danmei novel to disseminate information. Some popular sites became popular and attracted danmei culture fans. For example, Jinjiang (晋江), one of the largest Chinese online literature sites, had around 437,900 original danmei novels

created by Jinjiang's users till June 13, 2018 (Jinjiang, 2018). Another big danmei novel site is Lucifer Club (路西佛俱乐部, Luxifo Julebu), which has 32,968 danmei novels published by its users. These large numbers of danmei novels are not easy to search on Jinjiang and Lucifer Club. They usually hide under the name of pure love (纯爱, chun'ai) or BL (abbreviated for boys' love). This was because of the state's censorship and anti-porn campaign, in which homosexual romance novels are included as the pornographic expressions that are against "the political stability of the society and the security of political ideology" (社会政治稳定和意识形态安全, shehui zhengzhi wending he yishi xingtai anquan) (Guo, 2011). The state's anti-porn censorship and campaign, however, did not hinder the underground development of danmei culture. The novels that inspired by danmei novels but depicting female-female romantic relationship and called by fans as Baihe (百合) novels have appeared and been attracting readers on Jinjiang and Lucifer Club.

Some sites that circulate ACG and ACG information also appeared. These sites include AcFun (<http://www.acfun.cn/>) and Tucao (吐槽, <http://www.tucao.cc/>), which are the two video sites providing anime and comics established in 2008. Drawyoo (<http://www.drawyoo.com/>) is a site for anime and comic painters to upload original anime drawings. Onijiang (欧尼酱, <http://www.onijiang.com/>) is a social networking site based on users' ACG tastes. These online sites facilitated Chinese ACG fans to publish or read ACG information and to construct online ACG community. Bilibili is one of the sites and online communities providing ACG and non-ACG. The following section will illustrate all Bilibili's symbolic elements, anime and beyond the anime, which displays the creativity of Bilibili users.

(ii) Bilibili's Symbolic Elements: Anime and Beyond

Bilibili is a leading online community that sparks young Chinese's creativity. As section 1.1 has introduced, Bilibili encourages the spread of user-generated content. The total number of user-generated videos and live streams has climbed to 10 million in 2018 (Bilibili, 2018e). Bilibili's CEO Chen Rui believed this large volume of user-generated content is important, saying

“(if there is) no original user-generated content, I think this community will not exist any more” (没有原创内容, 我认为就没有社区; meiyou yuanchuang neirong, wo renwei jiumeiyou shequ) (Midnight Press, 2018). It implies that the users’ creativity and contribution helped Bilibili developing from an only anime-related site to a site with more content and more symbolic elements. This section, therefore, will illustrate Bilibili’s symbolic elements.

Before listing Bilibili symbolic elements, this thesis will first refer to one Bilibili user’s experience in the Bilibili online community. This user’s username is Hibernate Moon (蛰又月, zheyoyue). Hibernate Moon wrote a public column on Bilibili about the experience of how Hibernate Moon had interested in Bilibili community and became a member of Bilibili. This column shows Bilibili’s symbolic elements, which will illustrate later:

Bilibili, in my impression, is a fantastic world with diverse characteristics...I lay on the bed with a friend and watched a series of anime on my friend’s smartphone...At that moment, the plots and images attracted me, and even after I watched several episodes, I kept thinking about it. For me, it was a new experience I never had before...I asked my friend what the application my friend used to watch the anime, and my friend told me it was Bilibili...What is Bilibili? What the hell is Bilibili? I haven’t heard it before. Then my friend showed me some videos...only one video I could recall (and it) was an auto-tune remix-theme video, in which a hamster screams weirdly. This is one of Bilibili auto-tune remix-theme videos elements. After this, I downloaded the Bilibili smartphone application and I seemed to have a crush on it. I want to tell you that the thing Bilibili attracted me was not anime but the music district. The first song I listened to was Hatsune Miku’s⁷. Then I browsed all day on Bilibili. ◯▽◯... I suddenly got curious whether there are other more exciting contents in Bilibili, so I watched auto-tune remix-theme videos, laughing all

⁷ Hatsune Miku is a singing voice synthesizer produced by a Japanese music technology company.

day just like I went crazy... now I still think it is interesting, uploaders⁸ are genius...To be honest, at the first time I used Bilibili, I even didn't know what bullet comment is. Later, in one video, I saw someone send a bullet comment, saying "let's make bullet comments", and then thickly dotted bullet comments showed up and filled my eyes. After this shock, I understand more about the meaning of bullet comment. It's real "bullet comments" ☹️. Someone later sent "stop commenting, be careful of being reported". Then I opened the little punishment room (小黑屋, xiaohewu) with curiosity...each user in the little punishment room is genius and talks weirdly, I like checking the little punishment room and look at the reasons why some users were punished ~~☆☆ I can't fall asleep late at night, I want to see what interesting things all these punished users have said...The more I know, the more profound emotional attachment I have to Bilibili...People on Bilibili seem like real friends, though limited by the Internet, there is always a bond connecting everyone, heart to heart...I always bear in mind that it is Bilibili that being the bond connecting us. This is a community belonging to us. (Hibernate Moon, 2018; see original sentences in Chinese in Appendix 1.2)

Some phrases are noteworthy, which include as Bilibili's symbolic elements. They are anime, auto-tune remix-theme video, bullet comment (弹幕, danmu), the little punishment room (小黑屋, xiaohewu) and emojis such as ☹️ and ☹️. The first Bilibili representative element is anime. Anime is important content and element of Bilibili. Anime provides the inspiration for Bilibili in designing the site. For instance, on Bilibili's homepage, there are two representative anime images named the Bilibili girls (Bilibili 娘, Bilbili niang). They are 22 Girl (22 娘, 22 niang) and 33 Girl (33 娘, 33 niang). Figure 1.7 shows the images of 22 Girl and 33 Girl. They were the most popular two anime images among Bilibili users in the activity of selecting Bilibili girls (Bilibili 娘, bilibili niang) on August 16, 2010. Since then, 22 Girl and 33 Girl

⁸ Uploaders (up 主, up zhu) are the users who make or upload videos.

have become Bilibili's representative anime images on Bilibili's homepage as Figure 1.8 shows. Figure 1.8 is a clip of the Bilibili homepage with 22 Girl and 33 Girl shown at the top. Bilibili even attaches personalities to 22 Girl and 33 Girl. 22 Girl is passionate (热情的, reqingde) and 33 Girl is sober (情感冷静, qinggan lengjing) (Bilibili, 2018e). Bilibili also gives 22 Girl and 33 Girl a toy calls the Little Television (小电视, xiaodianshi), as Figure 1.9 shows.

Figure 1.7: 22 Girl, on the left side, and 33 Girl, on the right side. Available at: <https://link.bilibili.com/p/center/index#/my-room/live-haruna> (Accessed: 10 July, 2018).



Figure 1.8: A clip of Bilibili homepage. Available at: <https://www.bilibili.com/> (Accessed: 10 July, 2018).

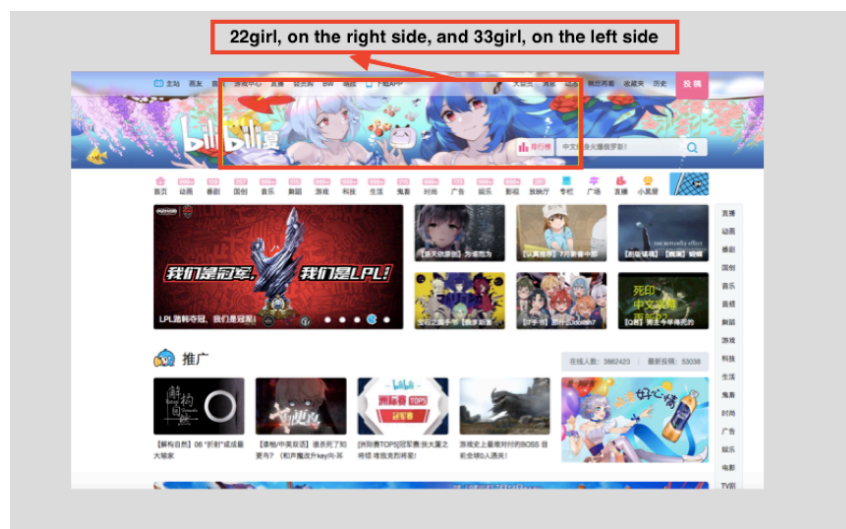


Figure 1.9: The image of Little Television, in An Old Rogue Lex's (老流氓 Lex, LaoLiumang Lex) column called Little Television's Ninth Anniversary Today (今天小电视九周年, jintian xiaodianshi jiuzhounian). Available at: <https://www.bilibili.com/read/cv638630?from=search> (Accessed: 10 July, 2018).



The anime element also can be found in the anime district and in fan works of anime video mash-up, which indicates that the anime is popular among Bilibili users. Video mash-up is the audiovisual content that uses clips of text, audio and video from existing content. The anime district is a large district on Bilibili. There are three main topics under the anime district—anime (动画, donghua), new TV anime (番剧, fanju) and domestic anime (国创, guochuang). The topic of anime (动画, donghua) provide users with the space to upload anime video mash-ups, while the topic of new TV anime provides new Japanese anime. The topic of domestic anime includes Chinese anime. All these three topics embrace video mash-ups that made by anime fans. These fan works are based on existing content. For example, in the topic of domestic anime, one Bilibili user named Depression (抑郁症, yiyuzheng) uploaded a five-episodes video mash-up called “The Most Impressive Dialogues in Domestic Anime” (国漫中直击灵魂的台词, guomanzhong zhiji linghun de taici), which included the dialogues from the Chinese domestic anime that had impressed Depression (Depression, 2018). This five-episodes video mash-up attracted around 146,000 views from July 7, 2018, to July 10, 2018. This large number of viewing times on Depression’s five-episodes video mash-up in only three days means there was popularity widely spread among the viewers on the most impressive dialogues in domestic anime.

The content of video mash-up also includes the clips of television series. The video mash-up that include clips of television series is called auto-tune remix-theme video (鬼畜视频, guichu shipin), which is the second representative element of Bilibili that has mentioned in Hibernate Moon's column. Auto-tune remix-theme video is a video repeating clips of video, music and lyrics from different television series in a new way. This kind of fan work is not only for entertaining but also expresses the attitudes of Bilibili users on social issues. To explain this, a popular auto-tune remix-theme video called The Judicial Official of the Song Dynasty Rap Song (大宋饶舌提刑官, dasong raoshe tixingguan) will be referred to as an example. This auto-tune remix-theme video is made by a Bilibili user called Not Plot (非桥段, Feiqiaoduan). It has received around 1.927 million views and 5,415 viewer's comments till July 23, 2018, since being uploaded on October 24, 2016 (Not Plot, 2016). Not Plot mashes up the clips of the television series called *The Judicial Official of Song Dynasty* (大宋提刑官, da song ti xing guan) and the background rap song called The New York Nightfall made by Position Music, and he re-edited the subtitles. This auto-tune remix-theme video has five episodes. Previous four episodes tell the stories about how the main character Song Ci (宋慈), who is a judicial official in the Southern Song Dynasty, solves four criminal cases. The fifth episode of The Judicial Official of the Song Dynasty Rap Song presents the dialogues between Song Ci and Diao Guangdou (刁光斗). In the television series, Diao is a local governor who commits corruption by sending money as gifts to his superiors for retaining the position in the Southern Song Dynasty government. The dialogues between Song and Diao are about corruption. While Song criticizes Diao's corrupt behaviour in solving criminal cases, Diao insists that corruption is a common issue in the Southern Song Dynasty that even Song, a candid judicial official, is unable to fight. Most viewers' of this auto-tune remix-theme video commented that ordinary people could do nothing to the officials' corruption, such as "corrupted politicians help each other" (官官相护, guanguan xianghu) and "actually, Diao is exactly right. In politics, to protect himself, he has to be complicit with the corruption" (其实, 刁大人说的很对的。官场上, 为了自保,

只能同流合污; qishi, diaodaren shuode henduide. Guanchangshang, weile zibao, zhineng tongliuhewu). To this extent, viewers of The Judicial official of the Song Dynasty Rap Song expressed their different attitudes.

Bilibili's third important representative element is the bullet comment. It helps to create an immersive entertainment experience for users. Figure 1.10 shows the bullet comments in a video mash-up. In this video mash-up, the viewers' comments almost flooded the video section. It is similar in the live stream channel. Figure 1.11 shows the situation when white-colour bullet comments flooded the live stream channel. These bullet comments create "a highly interactive and enjoyable viewing experience" by allowing users in "displaying thoughts and feelings of other viewers who are watching the same video" (Bilibili, 2018e). This means that bullet comment is important in connecting users in the Bilibili online community.

Figure 1.10: Bullet comments in a mash-up video's comment section, in Bilibili's user Crying Soldier's (泪腺战士, leixian zhanshi) video called Familiar, Different Flying Shooting Game (Familiar, 不一样的飞行射击; Familiar, buyiyang de feixing sheji). Available at: <https://www.bilibili.com/video/av537814> (Accessed: 16 April, 2013).

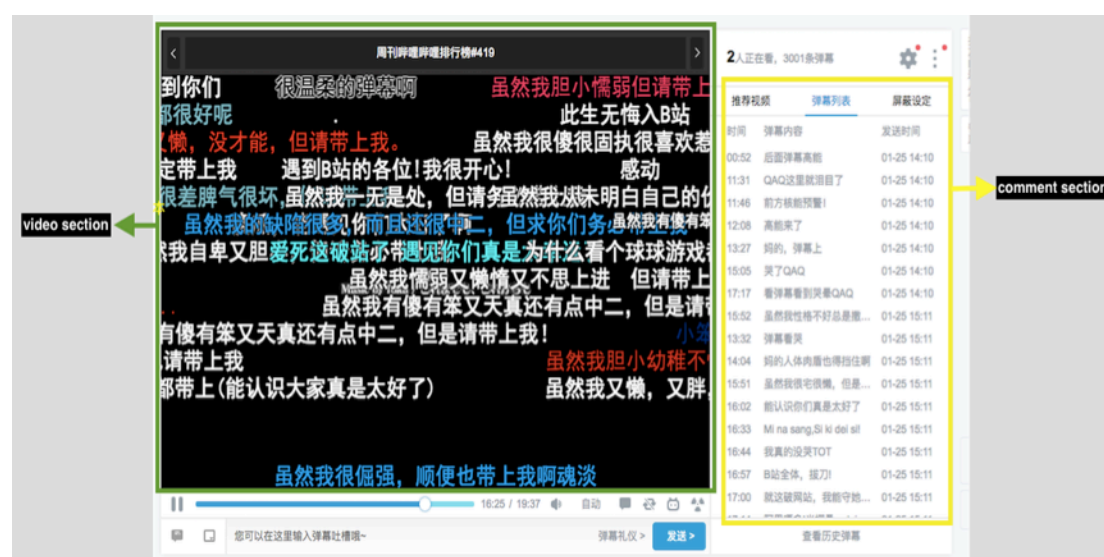


Figure 1.11: Bullet comments in the comment section of live stream channel, from LS 4's live stream on April 11, 2018 (Accessed: 11 April, 2018).



The little punishment room (小黑屋, xiaoheiwu) is another representative element of Bilibili mentioned in Hibernate Moon's column. The little punishment room is a webpage of Bilibili displaying the names of users who are punished. It is a punishment system set with the expectation of building "a friendly communicating platform" (一个友好的交流平台, yige youhaode jiaoliu pingtai) instead of a platform "providing (the users) a private video space" (提供个人的私密视频空间, tigong gerende simi shipin kongjian) (Bilibili, 2018f). To build "a friendly communicating platform", the little punishment room shows that Bilibili community is a self-disciplined community where users self-consciously follow Bilibili's rules. "Personal attacks" (人身攻击, renshen gongji) and "trash content" (垃圾内容, laji neirong) are forbidden. Bilibili defines "personal attacks" as the attacks on race, religion, gender, age, nationality, disability, sexual orientation and other language attacks on individuals or groups (涉及种族、宗教信仰、性别、年龄、国籍、残障、性取向等, 针对特定对象或群体的语言人身攻击; sheji zhongzu, zongjiaoxinyang, xingbie, nianling, guoji, canzhang, xingquxiang deng, chendui teding duixiang huo qunti de yuyan renshen gongji) (Bilibili, 2018f). Bilibili defines "trash content" as the meaningless comments or the unrelated comments about the video or the live stream. Meaningless comments include the "unrelated names, meaningless sentence or symbol, meaningless time prompts, the names of other TV anime, inane teasing, noncritical taunt to different opinion, irrelevant tags, spoiler tags of the video content, and the tags of advertisement, pornography, quarrel-inducing and politics" (Bilibili, 2018f; see

Chinese translations in Appendix 1.3). Bilibili used these “personal attacks” and “trash content” to discipline users what kind of comment is impolite and not welcomed.

On the other hand, Bilibili is strict in censoring videos, live streams and bullet comments to avoid of becoming “a private video space”. This is a response to the state’s regulation on Internet information service. On September 20, 2000, the State Council issued the “Regulation on Internet Information Service of the Republic People of China” (互联网信息服务管理办法, hulianwang xinxi fuwu guanli banfa), which clarified the range of information that can be provided by Chinese online sites:

Any information or content that against the fundamental principles established by the Constitution laws; that endangers the nation’s security, divulges state secrets, subverts the regime, and undermines national unity; that damages the nation’s honour and interests; that invokes national hatred, ethnic discrimination, and undermines the nation’s unity; that destroys the nation’s religious policy, promotes cults, and feudal superstitions; that spread rumours, disrupts social order, and undermines social stability; that spread obscenity (淫秽, yinhui), pornography, gambling, violence, murder, terror or abetting; that insults or slanders others, infringes the legitimate rights and interests of others; and other content prohibited by laws and administrative regulations (the State Council, 2000; see Chinese translation in Appendix 1.4).

Bilibili follows this regulation and sets it as the most fundamental rule of the site. If users who upload videos, host live streams or make bullet comments violate this regulation, their Bilibili ID will be permanently blocked by Bilibili to access services. For example, Figure 1.12 is the webpage of little punishment room, and it shows that five users were forbidden by Bilibili to send further comments for different reasons. The users called Izyti913 and Pretty Zimo (窈窕子墨, yaotiao zimo) were listed being blocked for the reason of publishing advertisement information, and the users called A Well-dressed Beast Durex (衣冠禽兽 durex, yiguan

qinshou durex), Bad-tempered Fish (暴躁老鱼, baozao laoyu) and JUSTIN_JIBER were listed for posting gambling and swindle information, publishing illegal website information and making personal attack comments (Little Punishment Room, 2018). These punishments show that Bilibili is following the regulation of the State Council.

Figure 1.12: The names of users who violated the State Council's regulation were listed on the page of little punishment room. Available at: <https://www.bilibili.com/blackroom/ban> (Accessed: 16 July, 2018).



The last symbolic element identified in Hibernate Moon's column is the emojis. Emojis are the graphic symbols used as a substitution of literal phrases in online communicating (Novak, Smailović, Sluban and Mozetič, 2015). Emojis are popular on many sites and social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and these emojis usually rely on the text that users type in. Slightly different from the emojis on other sites, the emojis on Bilibili rely on the users' imagination of the images. They are image phrases (颜文字, yan wenzi) on Bilibili. Image phrases are images composed of punctuation symbols. Figure 1.13 is the list of image phrases in Bilibili's live stream channels. This list provided by Bilibili is short, and Bilibili does not give an

explicit definition to each image phrase. The list that users make is much longer. The Bilibili user North Snow Wolf (北明雪狼, beiming xuelang) added more image phrases that he has collected on Bilibili in his column as Figure 1.14 displays. Beiming Xuelang collected and listed 596 image phrases, without giving explicit meaning to each image phrase. In Figure 1.14, some of the image phrases are complex, for example, “< (`□') > — ∅ ε (ㄗ_ㄗ) ㄗ”. This image phrase has three parts, “< (`□') >”, “— ∅” and “ε (ㄗ_ㄗ) ㄗ”. “< (`□') >” is the image of an angry person and “ε (ㄗ_ㄗ) ㄗ” is an image of a crying person. “— ∅” is to make a strike with the fist. It seems that these three parts have different meanings. However, when putting them together, the combination means something new. The entire image phrase, “< (`□') > — ∅ ε (ㄗ_ㄗ) ㄗ”, means an angry person is making a strike with the fist to a crying person. To this extent, an image phrase carries a particular emotion. This was supported by one Bilibili user called Island People A (岛民 A, DaominA), saying “the main function of image phrase is to display cuteness and express emotion” (Island People A, 2018). “One character of image phrase is cuteness (可爱、萌; ke'ai, meng)...the other character is imaginative” (颜文字的一个特点就是可爱、萌...另一个特点就是画面感强、想象力丰富; yanwenzi de yige tedian jiushi keai, meng...lingyige tedian jiushi huamiangan qiang, xiangxiangli fengfu) (Island People A, 2018). When a user sees an image phrase, it can be read directly from the first glance with less misunderstanding. Image phrases are less aggressive and will not be misused as “the weapons to attack each other” (互撕、互喷的武器; husi, hupen de wuqi) (Island People A, 2018).

Figure 1.13: The list of image phrases in Bilibili’s live stream channels, taken from LS 2’s live stream channel (Accessed: 18 July, 2018).

(∧∇∧) (∇∇∇) (=ω·=) (·ω·)
 (¬¬Δ¬)~ (·∇·) (°∇°) (¬3¬) ∩ (∇∇∇) ∩
 (:3J <) (·_>·) ←_← →_→ (<_<) (>_>)
 (;¬¬) (¬¬□¬) (°Δ°≡°Δ°)!? Σ(°Δ°;
 Σ(¬□¬||) (·; ω; ·) (/TΔT)/ (∧·ω·∧) (°·ω·°)
 (•¬(I)¬•) ε=ε=(/≧≧≧)/ (··_·) (-_#)
 (¬∧¬) (¬ε(#¬)Σ \ (Δ¬)/ (#_¬)⊥⊥
 (¬°□°) (⊥⊥⊥ ←_← (♥Δ♥)
 Σ>-("°ω° ")⇒→ / / / / / (‡°Δ°) ⊥⊥⊥
 ·*·:≡(ε:) (汗) (苦笑)

Figure 1.14: A clip that taken from the Bilibili user called North Snow Wolf's column. Available at: <https://www.bilibili.com/read/cv163066?from=search> (Accessed: 19 January, 2018).

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 (¬¬¬) (>_<) ∇∇∇
 ... (°_°;) ... (¬∞¬) (¬¬¬) ∩ (°□°) ∩ (°□°)
 (¬¬¬) =△ (¬¬¬) ∩ ⊥⊥⊥ (°□°) ∩ ⊥⊥⊥
 ⊥⊥⊥ ∩ (°□°) ⊥⊥⊥ ∩ (°□°) ∩ ⊥⊥⊥
 (⊥⊥⊥) =○# (¬#) 3¬ < (°□°) >—Cε (¬¬¬) 3
 <(¬¬¬)¬θ¬θ¬θ¬☆ (>□<¬)
 ∩ (∇∇) ∩ ∩ (¬_¬) ∩ ∩ (¬¬¬) ∩
 ∩ (¬¬¬) ∩ (·~·) ' ∩ (¬¬) ∩
 (¬□) (#¬¬) (¬¬||) ≡¬¬≡
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1.3 Chinese Live Streaming and Bilibili

Live streaming is a genre of entertainment that has become popular in China since 2005. It started with video chat-rooms on computers and laptops and then on smartphones. In 2005, YY Live and 9158, which offered online audio chat services, began to provide public video chat-rooms. These public video chat-rooms were called Show Rooms (秀场, xiuchang), where female streamers sang, danced and chatted through the web-cameras (Cao and Ren, 2016). This form of live streaming facilitated the communication between streamers and viewers via text, audio and video rather than through purely text and audio. In 2013, YY Live started providing gaming live streams, and this was followed by Douyu Live (斗鱼直播, douyu zhibo) which began

providing live streaming service in 2014. In 2015, YY Live, 9158 and Douyu Live began providing mobile live streaming service, where the live streams could be watched on smartphones. This led to the proliferation of live streaming, and by 2016, more sites, such as Ingkee (映客, yingke) and Yizhibo (一直播, yizhibo) had established and competed for users (Iresearch Inc., 2017). Up to 2018, more than 200 live streaming sites had established. In these 200 live streaming sites, the nine most popular sites are YY Live, Douyu Live, Ingkee, Yizhibo, Panda TV (熊猫 TV, xiongmao TV), Longzhu Live (龙珠直播, longzhu zhibo), Huya Live (虎牙直播, huya zhibo), Ihani Live (哈你直播, ihani zhibo) and Laifeng Live (来疯直播, laifeng zhibo). This section will first introduce how live streaming emerged and developed with ICT developments and other important social changes in China and then will introduce Bilibili live streaming service. This section will help understand how Bilibili live streaming develops with the fast developing Chinese live streaming.

(i) Development of Live Streaming in China

The Chinese live streaming developed within ICT developments and social changes from 2013. These ICT developments and social changes include the lower cost of accessing to the Internet, the overwhelming market of smartphones, the fast spread of third-party mobile payment and the popularity of gifting on live streaming sites. This section will illustrate these social changes and their influences on Chinese live streaming.

A. Lower cost of accessing to the Internet

The widespread live streaming benefited from the Chinese state's implementation of the policy called "faster Internet connectivity with lower fees" (提速降费, tisu jiangfei). The idea of speeding up Internet access with lower fees was outlined in the manifesto of "Broadband China" (宽带中国, kuandai zhongguo) by General Office of the State Council in 2013. This manifesto aimed to promote the growth of the national economy by constructing a national ICT infrastructure, in which the Internet is available via the broadband Internet and cellular smartphones for families in cities and countryside (General Office of the State Council, 2013). Simply put, this

strategy aims to expand the broadband coverage and usage of household broadband (家庭宽带, *jiating kuandai*) and smartphone Internet access in cities and countryside. The fee of every household accessing to the Internet with household broadband has decreased to CNY 0.49 per megabyte in June of 2018 from CNY 5.9 per megabyte at the end of 2014 (China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, 2018).

The decline of smartphone Internet access fee is noteworthy. This is due to the large increase in cellular smartphone users in the past five years. As one part of “Broadband China”, speeding up the Internet accessing for cellular smartphones and lowering the Internet access fees have been practised since 2013. Three state-owned telecommunication operators, China Mobile (中国移动, *zhongguo yidong*), China Unicom (中国联通, *zhongguo liantong*) and China Telecom (中国电信, *zhongguo dianxin*) responded “Broadband China” by offering 4G Internet service for cellular smartphone users. The fee of 4G Internet service started at CNY 139 per gigabyte in 2014 and fell to CNY 23 per gigabyte by the end of 2017 (China News, 2017; Lu, 2018). This decrease enabled smartphone users to go online at a much lower price.

B. Large market of smartphones and 4G phones

The fast development of Chinese live streaming was facilitated by the sales of smartphones and 4G phones. To watch live streams on smartphones, the steady access of Internet with high-quality streaming is necessary. From June of 2015 to June of 2016, the output of smartphones has overwhelmingly occupied in Chinese domestic phone market. The total output of phones, including cellular phones and smartphones, in China were around 44.56 billion (CNNIC, 2016b). The output of smartphones was around 41.91 billion and that of 4G phones were around 41.71 billion. It seems that the output of smartphones and that of 4G phones overlapped, with only a difference of around 0.2 billion. It means there were almost 41.71 billion smartphones had 4G Internet service.

The large output of 4G smartphones and the lower fees of accessing the Internet facilitated the users who host or watch live streams through mobile phones. When 4G Internet access fee dropped, the large output of smartphones with 4G Internet access service promoted the increase of Chinese Internet users using smartphones. The number of cellular smartphone users who was surfing the Internet increased from 622 million in December of 2015 to 753 million in December of 2017, and, since 2015, cellular smartphones have become the primary device for Chinese Internet users to access the Internet, which accounts for 97.5% of all Chinese Internet users (CNNIC, 2016b; CNNIC, 2018). These put the foundation for the people who host or watch live streams on mobile phones. As a result, live streamers can host live streams and viewers can watch live streams despite the temporal and spatial restrictions.

C. Spread of third-party online payment and mobile payment

Mobile live streaming also spread with the assistance of online financing, especially third-party online payment and mobile payment. In 2010, the state-owned bank the People's Bank of China announced "Procedures for Non-Financial Institution Payment Services" (非金融机构支付服务管理办法, *fei jingrong jigou zhifu fuwu guanli banfa*), in which the third-party mobile payment providers were allowed to take deposits and offer payment services to cellular smartphone users (the People's Bank of China, 2010). This created a competition amongst the providers of third-party mobile payment providers, such as Alibaba (阿里巴巴) and Tencent (腾讯, *tengxun*). This competition also extended to more fields, such as the competition on the cab-calling service between smartphone applications Tencent's Didi Cab-calling (滴滴打车, *didi dache*) and Alibaba's Kuaidi Cab-calling (快滴打车, *kuaidi dache*), the competition on meal-ordering service between Meituan (美团, *meituan*) and Alibaba's Ele.me (饿了么, *eleme*) and the competition on personal finance products between Alibaba's Yu'eBao (余额宝,) and Tencent's Tenpay (财付通, *cai fu tong*) (Xinhua Economic News, 2014; Miao and Jayakar, 2016). Third-party mobile payment providers also touched on social networking applications, such as Wechat (微信, *weixin*) where money transfers as the

lucky money Hong Bao (红包, hongbao) to friends and family members (Xinhua Economic News, 2014). These changes in online financing made Chinese Internet users accustomed to using third-party online payments and mobile payment in their daily lives, which brought about the popularising of virtual gifting on Chinese live streaming sites.

D. Virtual gifting on Chinese live streaming sites

Virtual gifting is the viewers' behaviour of sending the virtual gifts that the sites set to streamers. It has been popular on the worldwide live streaming sites, such as viewers send cheer coins to live streamers on the gaming live streaming site Twitch. Viewers pay money for virtual gifts and send virtual gifts to live streamers when they like the performances of live streamers or assume the performances worth rewards (Scissors, Burke and Wengrovitz, 2016; Tang, Venolia and Inkpen, 2016; Zhou, 2017). To this extent, virtual gifting is the behaviour of viewers to show appreciation and support to live streamers (Lu, Xia, Heo and Wigdor, 2018). Virtual gifting enables viewers engaging in live stream channels by not only watching live streams but also contributing to the income of live streamers (Tang, 2016; Yu, Jung, Kim and Jung, 2018).

Virtual gifting in Chinese is called dashang (打赏), which means giving rewards to live streamers. Virtual gifting started from Show Rooms, where viewers buy gifts by using the money transferred from bank accounts to the sites on the computers or laptops. With the increasing market of smartphones and the spread of third-party mobile payment, live streaming sites began to provide live streaming services on smartphones. This made virtual gifting easier. Viewers do not have to spend time transferring money from their bank accounts and waiting the money reach the live streaming sites. They can use their smartphones to scan the QR code (Quick Response code) provided by the third-party mobile payment application on the computers or laptops. They can even directly buy virtual gifts with only using the third-party mobile payment application on smartphones.

The Chinese state tried to regulate the bad influence that live streaming might have on society. For example, hosting a live stream is becoming a new profession for young men and women who wish to become famous on live streaming sites. For example, some companies established to give lessons on how to attract viewers and provide facilities to the people who wish to become full-time live streamers (Weller, 2017). The people who do not wish to become full-time streamers but are interested in doing live streams can also open their channels. Before April of 2016, people can become full-time or part-time live streamers without providing personal identification information. This lack of a threshold to host live streams creates the possibility for live streamers to perform pornography and violence on the sites to attract viewers (Xiang, 2016). It drew the attention of the Ministry of Culture. In April of 2016, the Ministry of Culture (文化部, wenhuabu) inspected two live streaming sites Douyu and Panda TV, and 16,881 streamers were found on these two sites disseminating pornography, criminal promotion and violent information (Bai, 2016).

From 2016, the Ministry of Culture has begun to regulate live streaming sites under the state's policies. In April of 2016, the Ministry of Culture requested that the live streaming sites must register to provide live streaming services and the live streamers must register on live streaming sites and provide copies of personal identification information (CNNIC, 2016a; the Ministry of Culture, 2016; Xue, 2016). The cultural administrative department at the local level could penalise the live streaming sites that violate this regulation (the Ministry of Culture, 2016; Cyberspace Administration of China, 2016). The Ministry of Culture inspected 30 live streaming sites in June of 2016 and banned 12 of them to further operations because of disseminating pornography (CNNIC, 2018). These regulations aimed "to protect this (live streaming) industry for its future development under the state's policy" (为行业进一步健康发展奠定了政策基础, wei hangye jinyibu jiankang fazhan diandingle zhengce jichu) (CNNIC, 2017). This aim roots in a recognition that "live streaming sites put financial and human resources on the production of professional user-generated content, which making the good quality of live

streams an inevitable trend” (直播平台将优势资源集中于专业生产内容生产, 使得网络直播内容的精品化成为行业发展的必然趋势; zhibo pingtai jiang youshi ziyuan jizhongyu zhuan yu shengchan neirong shengchan, shide wangluo zhibo neirong de jingpinhua chengwei hangye fazhande biran qushi) (CNNIC, 2017). This means that the state hopes to lead the Chinese live streaming industry as an important part of economic growth rather than an issue creating problems to the society.

(ii) Bilibili and Its Live Streaming Service

Bilibili started providing live stream services on August 23, 2014. It was the first Chinese site that users can host live streams about ACG (You Wash White, 2017; Bilibili, 2018d). These ACG related live streams are classified as drawing (绘画, huihua) and gaming. With Bilibili expanding business, Bilibili developed ASMR, singing and chatting live streams. Users, who want to host live streams on Bilibili, must agree with the Bilibili Live Streaming Service Agreement (Bilibili 直播服务协议, bilibili zhibo fuwu xieyi) and provide identification proof before they open channels (Bilibili, 2019b). This is to ensure that live streamers are over eighteen years old and can take legal responsibility for their public behaviours within the laws and policies of the state. The users, who host live streams, are called live streamers (主播, zhubo). They can earn income from hosting live streams on Bilibili, and the income calls commission (佣金, yongjin). The commission is calculated from the value of the virtual gifts that viewers give in live stream channels. Bilibili called its virtual currency gold melon seed (金瓜子, jinguazi), and every 1,000 gold melon seeds cost CNY 1. Viewers recharge gold melon seeds and use them to buy the virtual gifts that Bilibili sets in live stream channels. The value of virtual gifts that live streamers have received is their commission. Live streamers can withdraw the commission by the 50:50 ratio split of income of the total value of the virtual gifts that they have received (Bilibili, 2019c). This ratio split of income makes Bilibili attain a half of live streamers' commission. This means that the more virtual gifts live streamers receive, the more benefits Bilibili will have from live streamers' commission.

To promote live stream channels, Bilibili sets a general leaderboard called Bilibili Leaderboard of Live Stream (Bilibili 直播排行榜, bilibili zhibo paihangbang), and there are six subordinate leaderboards respective to six topics. These topics are online games (网游, wangyou), mobile games (手游, shouyou), computer games (单机, danji), relaxing (娱乐, yule), singing and chatting station (电台, diantai), and drawing (绘画, huihua). The Bilibili Leaderboard of Live Stream and its six subordinate leaderboards show the affordance of Bilibili users in buying virtual gifts. As one user called Maple Ming (枫茗, feng ming) commented under the Bilibili Leaderboard of Live Stream that “this leaderboard makes us comprehend how rich the viewers are” (这个完全就是让我们知道 B 站土豪到底有多少, zhege wanquan jiushi rangwomen zhidao b zhan tuhao daodi youduoshao) (Bilibili, 2018g). This is because there is a competition between live streamers in being listed on the six subordinate leaderboards. Every subordinate leaderboard lists the most popular fifty live streamers in each topic. The number of gold melon seeds that this live streamer has received from viewers’ virtual gifting shows the popularity of a live streamer (Bilibili, 2018g). The general leaderboard and subordinate leaderboards fluctuate with the number of virtual gifts that each live streamer has received. This means if a live streamer wants to be listed on the leaderboard, the live streamer has to retain viewers and persuade viewers to send virtual gifts as more as possible.

1.4 Summary of Chapter One

This chapter drew a general picture of Bilibili and Bilibili live streaming by referring to the social context. This chapter introduced Bilibili’s history, business model, video-playing technology, the spread of ACG culture in China, and the symbolic elements of Bilibili. The development of Chinese live streaming and Bilibili’s live streaming service were also introduced. The ACG culture in China developed under the influence of Japanese ACG culture from the 1980s. With China’s economic opening up, the Chinese state noticed the imports of foreign ACG may have bad impacts on young Chinese and also noted that the slow development of domestic ACG industry did not meet the

increasing market demand. The Chinese state has put efforts in cultivating domestic ACG industry, such as General Office of State Council's tax deduction for the domestic ACG companies from 2006 and the construction of anime industry districts at the province and city levels. Local governments at the province and city levels also respond to the central government's appeal with holding ACG festivals and events. At the meantime of the Chinese state cultivating domestic ACG industry, fans of Chinese ACG also were active in online and offline fan activities. With the Internet spreading in China from the 1990s, the convenience of the Internet has facilitated Chinese fans to publish or read more ACG information on the Internet. Fan-subbing groups, danmei novel writing and cosplaying developed. Online sites, such as Bilibili, also appeared to satisfy the need of ACG fans in publishing and reading ACG information.

Bilibili deeply rooted in the development of ACG culture in China. With its business expanding, Bilibili is ambitious to provide a variety of entertaining content for its young users. Live streaming has been popularising among Chinese Internet users since 2014. Its development benefited from the lower cost of accessing to the Internet, the large sales of smartphones and 4G phones, the fast spread of third-party online payment and mobile payment, and the popularity of virtual gifting on live streaming sites. More and more sites have joined the competition of providing live streaming service, including Bilibili. From 2014, Bilibili started providing live stream services, and it was the first site enabling users to host live streams about ACG.

Although anime is still a symbolic element, other symbolic elements emerge in Bilibili online community, such as auto-tune remix-theme video, bullet comment, the little punishment room, and emojis, also enrich users' participation on Bilibili. The live stream is one of the content that Bilibili expanded beyond ACG. The live stream is important to Bilibili. This is not only due to the reason that live streams can bring revenue to Bilibili but also because the interaction between live streamers and viewers displays how stable the Bilibili online community is. Live stream displays a transient interaction between live streamer and viewers. Either live streamers or

viewers, they are easy to come and easy to go. They can host, watch or abandon a live stream channel at any time for any reasons. This does not mean the community spirit is hard to construct in Bilibili's live stream channels. In the following two chapters, it will be illustrated that the community spirit is easy to find in Bilibili live stream channels. In each live stream channel, the live streamer is a leading role, because live streamer is the person who makes the performance for viewers to watch and comment and they attract viewers to congregate around live stream channels. The next chapter, therefore, will illustrate the participation of live streamers that analysed from conducting participant observations on selected twelve live stream channels. These findings will help to understand what performances the selected live streamers have done and how their performances contributed to the construction of the community spirit in live stream channels.








Chapter Two: Participation of Live Streamers

Live streamers are the users who create performances for other users to watch and comment. Each live stream channel attracts a certain number of viewers and creates a communicating space for live streamers and viewers. Accordingly, a cluster of small communities forms in live stream channels. As far as I have observed on the selected twelve live stream channels, the cluster of small communities in live stream channels was the result of every live streamer's endeavours in self-branding. Self-branding is an advertising method in attracting the attention of a targeted group of consumers, which comprises the image building and the narration of the self. It is a series of marketing strategies to "think about the self as a saleable commodity" to be promoted and sold to potential consumers (Marwick, 2013: p.166). It is also a process of extracting value and circulating cultural meanings (Wernick, 1991; Hearn, 2008). As one genre of advertisement, a definition of the self is in need. Here, the self describes a commodity packaged with persuasive desires and styles of life in the consumer society (Giddens, 1991). To brand the self is to promote a particular style of life and encourage practising consumption around the self.

The result of self-branding is to bring Bilibili's live streamers a certain number of viewers, and, more significantly, the revenue. As Chapter One has introduced, Bilibili is a for-profit company with the legal responsibility to their shareholders. The services are provided for creating business revenue instead of practising corporate social responsibility or entertaining users. Even if corporate responsibility is narrated in the framework, it is also marketing means for the company to build a positive corporate image (Boyd, 2016). This, therefore, influences the actions of users, especially the live streamers'. For those live streamers who wish to make a profit from their generated content, their actions are also one of the sources of profit to Bilibili. It is hard to know whether every live streamer on Bilibili does live stream for making money or having fun. However, the commercial nature of Bilibili reminds us that live streamers are affected by the monetization of their performances. This monetization of live streamer' performance completes when the Bilibili

calculates viewer's virtual gifts into the commission of live streamers. Most virtual gifts set by Bilibili are valued with RMB, as Table 2.1 shows. In Table 2.1, every 1,000 gold melon seeds (金瓜子, jinguazi) cost CNY 1. Silver melon seeds (银瓜子, yinguazi) do not cost money and can be collected while watching live streams. To this extent, viewers' virtual gifts define live streamers' income (Dawson, 2017).

Table 2.1: Details of common virtual gifts, from February 2, 2017 to October 20, 2017.

Gift Image	Name	Cost	Function
	666	666 gold melon seeds (equals CNY ¥0.0666)	Add 666 points of experience to the level of fan badge
	233	233 gold melon seeds (equals CNY ¥0.0233)	Add 233 points of experience to the level of fan badge
	Little Television Boat (小电视飞船, xiaodianshi)	1,245,000 gold melon seeds (equals CNY ¥1,245)	Advertise live streamer in all live stream channels
	Rhythm Storm (节奏风暴, jiezou fengbao)	100,000 gold melon seeds (equals CNY ¥100)	Add 100,000 points of experience to the level of fan badge
	B Kela (B 珂拉, bkela)	9,900 gold melon seeds (equals CNY ¥9.9)	Subscribe to the channel and receive fan badge
	Meow Girl (喵娘, miao niang)	5,200 gold melon seeds (equals CNY ¥5.2)	Add 5,200 points of experience to the level of fan badge
	Spicy Gluten (辣条, latiao)	100 silver melon seeds (does not costs money)	Add 100 points of experience to the level of fan badge

When understanding live streamers' performances in the frame of self-branding, there come the questions: what the selves do Bilibili live streamers brand and how do they brand? Their performances in channels or other

branding actions in forms of presenting themselves bring income. For example, the videos initially made and uploaded by live streamers with receiving over 1,000 times of views can create income for these live streamers (Bilibili, 2017b). The more viewers the live streamers attract, the higher income the live streamers would have. The selected twelve live streamers in this thesis have used strategies to promote themselves to more viewers. They mainly take two strategies, the text strategy and the performance strategy. The text strategy is to create an impression to attract and retain viewers. It includes three types. They are defining a channel with a self-introduction, putting personal tags and guiding the viewers to subscribe to their channels or to follow live streamers' other social media. The performance strategy is a strategy of live streamers to attract and retain viewers with performances, which makes up the limitation of text strategy.

This section, therefore, will illustrate both text strategy and performance strategy that the selected twelve live streamers had taken. The examination on the effect of each self-branding strategy will be given with examples. The self-branding is a process of live streamers defining their selves within ACG culture and beyond ACG. What ACG identities do live streamers express? How do live streamers adapt to ACG identities they created in their channels and how do they exploit ACG culture to make income? What else, beyond ACG culture, is expressed in live streamers' performances? The answers to these questions will help understand the performances of live streamers and the leading role of live streamers in practising ACG-related culture.

2.1 The Interface of Bilibili Live Stream Channel

Before explaining live streamers' self-branding strategies, the interface of a Bilibili live stream channel will be introduced. This will help to know where live streamers can promote themselves in Bilibili live stream channels. The interface of a Bilibili live stream channel has three main parts: the streaming section (直播区, zhiboqu), the comment section (评论区, pinglunqu), and the introduction section (频道介绍, pindao jieshao). This section will select the live

stream channel of LS 5, who hosts ASMR live streams, as an example to introduce the three parts. Figure 2.1 shows the streaming section and the comment section. In the streaming section, live streamers can stream the performance and decorate this section with texts, photos and images. For example, in Figure 2.1, in the live stream on September 20, 2017, LS 5 decorated her streaming section with two streaming images. Under her streaming images are some texts and a cat image. From the left side to the right side, they are the target of receiving 20 virtual gifts of Meow Girl (喵娘, miaoniang), a cat image, a piece of sentence advertising LS 5 with “if you love me, I hope you start with ASMR and keep loyal to my skills” (爱我的话, 我希望你, 始于 ASMR, 忠于我的技术; ai wo de hua, wo xiwang ni, shiyu ASMR, zhongyu wode jishu), and a list of thanks to viewers. This kind of decoration varies in different live stream channels. In the gaming live stream channels, the streaming section can be filled with the games without any decorations. For example, as Figure 2.2 shows, LS 3, who was one of the gaming live streamers on Bilibili, usually filled up her streaming section with the game she was playing in her channel.

Figure 2.1: The streaming section and the comment section of LS 5’s live stream channel (Accessed: 20 September, 2017).

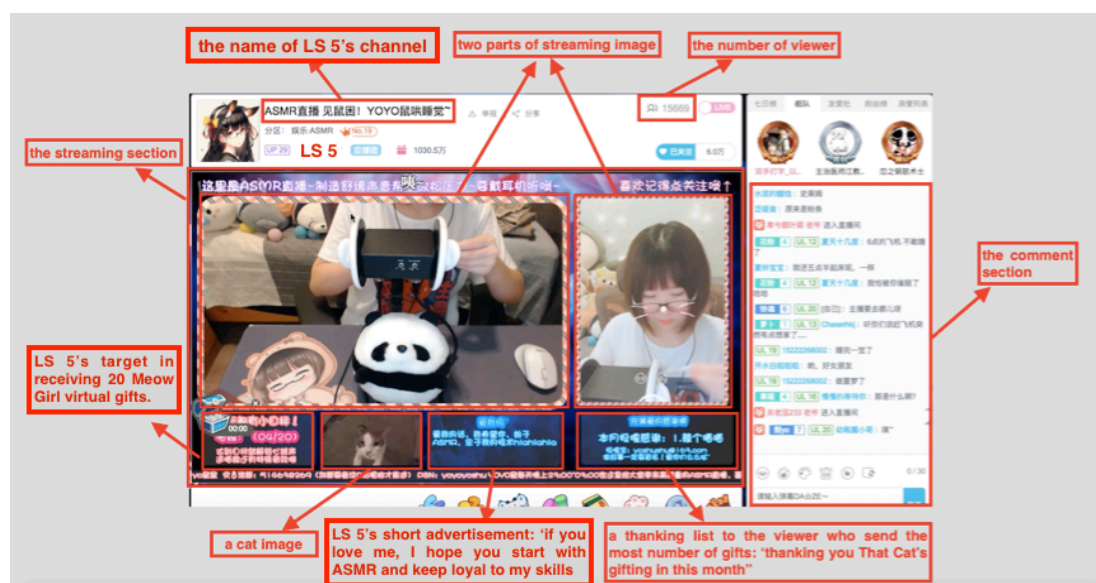
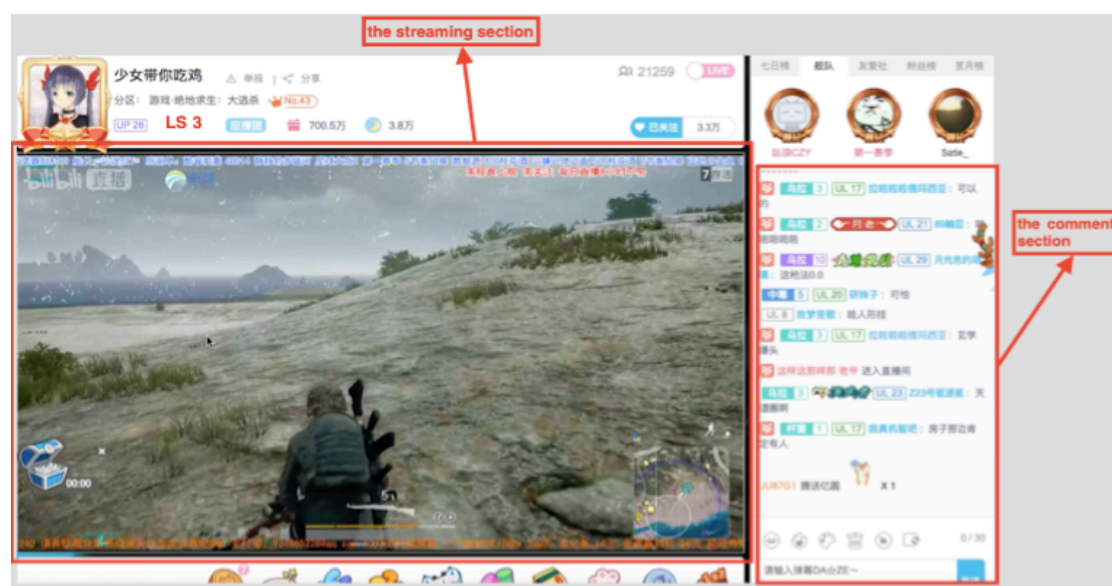


Figure 2.2: The streaming section was filled with LS's gaming in the live stream on October 11, 2017 (Accessed: 11 October, 2017).



At the right side of the streaming section in Figure 2.1 is the comment section. Viewers can make comments and send virtual gifts. Under the streaming section, as Figure 2.3 displays, there is a list of virtual gifts, as mentioned in Table 2.1. Bilibili provides this list of virtual gifts for viewers to send when they are watching performances. The introduction section is under the streaming section and the comment section, as Figure 2.3 shows. In LS 5's case, LS 5 puts her self-introduction of the live streaming time, the live stream content and the contact details of other social media. Live streamers can display information about themselves and their channels, and the information includes, but not limited to, the self-introduction, the live streaming time, the live stream content, and the contact details of other online social media. Having introduced the essential parts of a Bilibili live stream channel, the following sections will examine how live streamers deploy the text strategy and performance strategy and how they react to viewers' comments. An examination of the effects of these self-branding strategies will also make in this chapter.

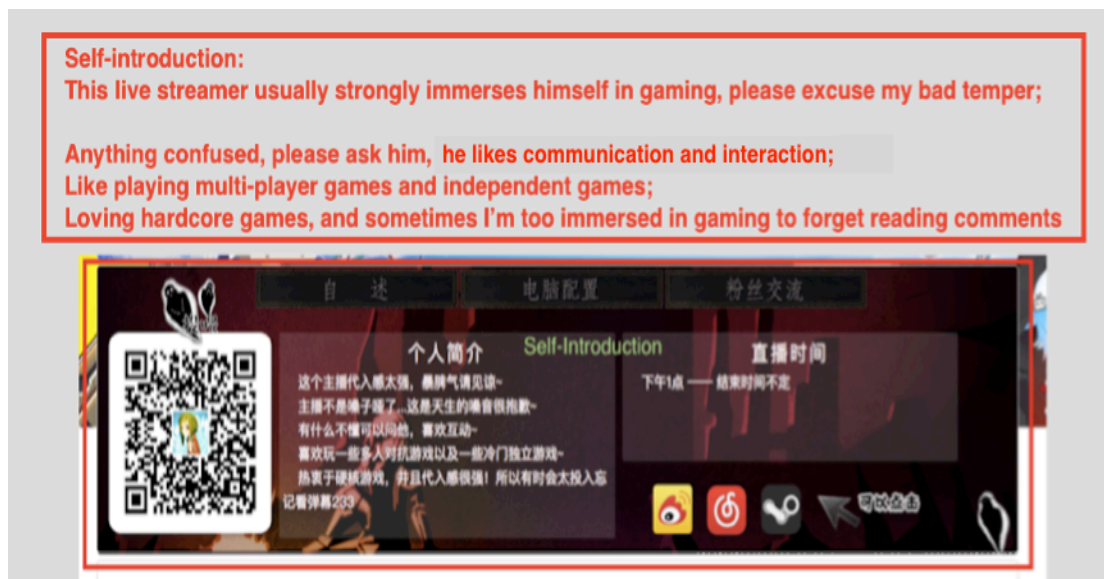
Figure 2.3: The introduction section of LS 5's live stream channel (Accessed: 20 September, 2017)



2.2 Text Strategy: Self-introduction, Tags, and Impression

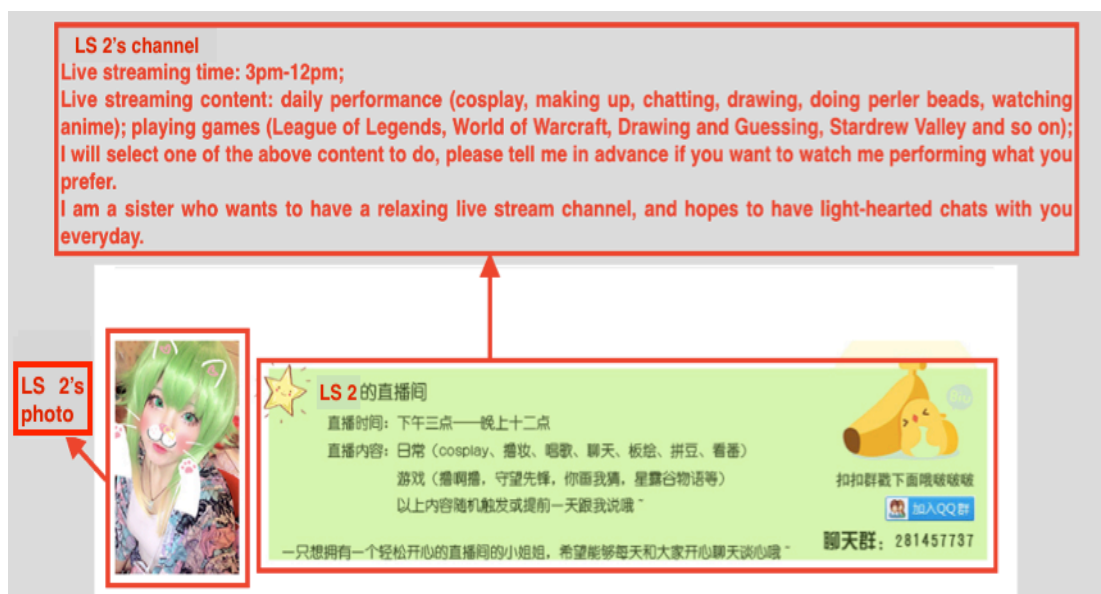
Live streamers widely deploy text strategy in Bilibili live stream channels. This section will introduce three types of text strategy. The first type is putting a self-introduction at the bottom of the channel. For new viewers, the introduction is the clue to know the basic information about live streamers and channels. For example, LS 11 describes himself as a gaming live streamer who is mainly interested in playing multiplayer games and independent games, as Figure 2.4 shows. He also describes himself in Figure 2.4 that “this live streamer is usually strongly immersed in gaming, please excuse my bad temper...sometimes I’m too immersed to forget reading comments” (这个主播代入感太强，暴脾气请见谅...有时会太投入忘记看弹幕; zhege zhubo dairugan taiqiang, baopiqi qing jianliang...youshi hui taitouru wangji kan danmu). This introduction tells viewers before they watch LS 11’s live streams that LS 11 is a gaming live streamer playing various genres of games, and he might be bad-tempered in gaming at times. For a new viewer, this introduction may make them consider whether or not to watch LS 11’s live streams.

Figure 2.4: LS 11’s self-introduction (Accessed: 1 June, 2017).



Similar to LS 11, LS 2 also makes a brief introduction about her and her channel. As Figure 2.5 shows, LS 2 defines herself as “a sister who wants to have a relaxing live stream channel, and hopes to have light-hearted chats with everyone every day” (一只想拥有一个轻松快乐的直播间的小姐姐，希望能够每天和大家开心聊天谈心哦; yizhi xiang yongyou yige qingsong kaixinde zhibojian de xiaojiejie, xiwang nenggou meitian he dajia kaixin liaotian tanxino). This introduction left an impression to viewers that LS 2’s channel would be relaxing. This can be explained in the photo that LS 2 put on the left side of LS 2’s self-introduction. In this photo, LS 2 wears a green hairpiece, a white T-shirt and a colourful coat, looking at the camera with a catlike sticker on her face. It makes LS 2 look like she is cosplaying an anime character or putting anime elements on her image. The self-introduction and the photo together give a general description of LS 2 as a live streamer who would like to perform various content and creates fun to viewers.

Figure 2.5: LS 2’s self-introduction (Accessed: 9 January, 2019).



Live streamers also put personal tags (个人标签, geren biaoqian) to describe their channels at the bottom of their channels, which is another type of text strategy in creating an impression about the channel and the live streamer. Before live streamers start live streaming, they can type in some tags to describe their channels. The tag comprises of a tag sign and several phrases as Figure 2.6 shows. The tag helps viewers to remember the impressions that live streamers are shaping or have shaped. For instance, as Figure 2.7 shows, LS 9 used four tags to describe her channel with phrases of “marker pen” (马克笔, make bi), “sketching (手绘, shouhui), “lazy” (咸鱼, xianyu) and “flatfish” (比目鱼, bimuyu). It is easy to find that LS 9 defines herself as a lazy live streamer who does sketching with marker pen and she wants the viewers to remember her by repeating her name in another tag. Similar to LS 9, LS 7 also types personal tags to describe her channel. Her tags are “chatting in duvet” (盖着棉被纯聊天, gaizhe mianbei chunliaotian), “ACG dancing⁹” and “cat person” (猫奴, maonu) as Figure 2.8 shows. With

⁹ ACG dancing (宅舞, zhaiwu) is a type of dancing popularised on Bilibili, in which dancer dancing with an accompany of the ACG music. According to the explanation of a Bilibili user named The Nickname Is Too Long Orz (昵称太长啦 Orz, nichen tai chang la Orz), ACG dancing is a repetition of simple movements and the movements either are initiated by the dancers or copy the existing movements in ACG works and previous ACG dancing works (The Nickname Is Too Long, 2018). No matter to create original movements or deploying the existing movements, the most important

these tags, LS 7 can be described as a live streamer who like cats and would like to chat and perform ACG dancing in her channel.

Figure 2.6: The composition of a tag. Image. Available at: <https://live.bilibili.com/455> (Accessed: 9 January, 2019).

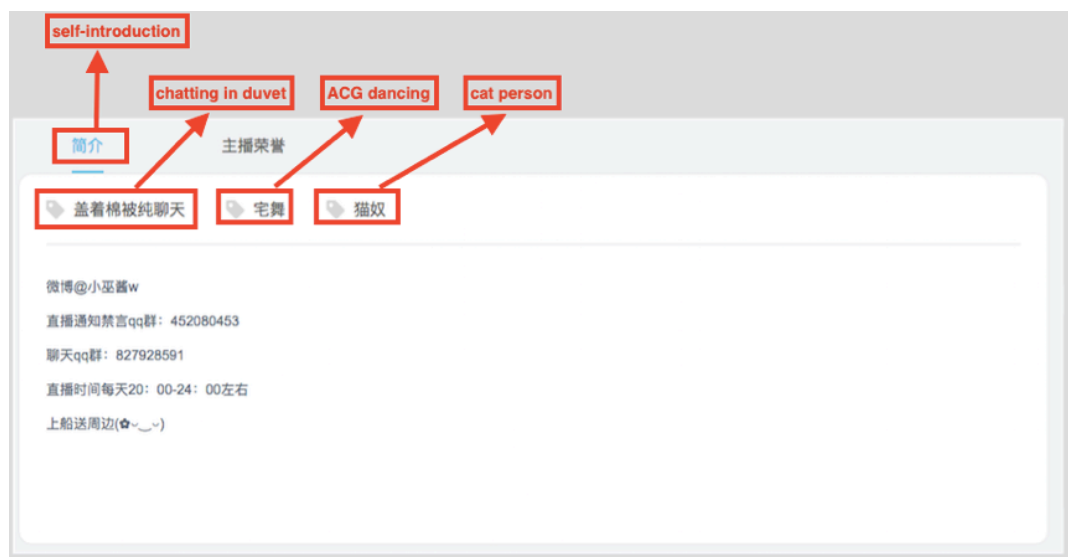


Figure 2.7: LS 9's personal tags above her self-introduction at the bottom of her live stream channel (Accessed: 9 January, 2019).



Figure 2.8: LS 7's personal tags above her self-introduction at the bottom of her live stream channel (Accessed: 9 January, 2019).

issue for the dancers is to catch the beats and follow the tempo of the ACG music during dancing (The Nickname Is Too Long, 2018).



The last type of text strategy is persuading viewers to subscribe to channels or to follow live streamers' other social media by putting reminder signs on the live streaming screen. For instance, as Figure 2.9 shows, LS 1 puts a sign with words of “you will not get lost when subscribed, thank you for your company” (点关注不迷路，感谢你陪我成长; dian guanzhu bu milu) at the right-up corner of the streaming section. When persuading viewers to follow other social media, some live streamers put contact details of other social media in the introduction at the bottom of the channel. For example, in Figure 2.10, below the personal tags are the contact details of LS 9's other social media, such as Sina Weibo¹⁰ and QQ groups¹¹. If the viewers of LS 9 are interested in knowing more about LS 9 besides her Bilibili live streams, viewers can follow LS 9 on other social media.

¹⁰ Sina Weibo (新浪微博, xinlang weibo) is the Chinese online blogging site functioning on computers, laptops, and mobile phones. It was established on August 14, 2009 by Sina (新浪, xinlang), a Chinese technology company. Sina Weibo introduces itself as the software of expressing emotions and the platform of communicating and sharing information (Sina Weibo, 2019). Users are free to post information, photos, images, videos and topics (Sina Weibo, 2019).

¹¹ QQ is a Chinese instant communicating software functioning on computers, laptops and mobile phones with functions of one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many literal chatting, voice calling and video calling (QQ, 2019). It was published by Tencent Technology (腾讯科技股份有限公司, tengxun keji gufen youxian gongsi) on February 11, 1999, which is a Chinese Internet technology company. QQ group is one of the services of QQ supports many-to-many communication between users who have the same hobbies or interests.

Figure 2.9: The texts of guiding viewers to subscribe LS 1's channel (Accessed: 26 September, 2017).



Figure 2.10: The contact details of LS 9's other social media were listed in the self-introduction at the bottom of LS 9's live stream channel (Accessed: 9 January, 2019).



These three types of text strategy are deployed to attract viewers. But, the effect of this advertising is limited at times. The insufficient description of the texts causes it. For example, LS 6's self-introduction in Figure 2.11 contains three tags and a statement of his computer configuration. The three tags are "Mr. Kute" (库特菌, kute jun), "voice-lover benefit" (声控福利, shengkong fuli) and "gaming" (游戏, youxi). This self-introduction may confuse the viewers who are new to LS 6's channel, such as what "voice-

lover benefit” means and what game or games LS 6 plays. No further text explanation is given in LS 6’s self-introduction for these confusions. Another reason that explains the limited effect of text strategy is that it is hard for viewers, especially new viewers, to decide whether the channel is worth subscribing to by reading live streamers’ text introduction. The text introduction is abstract, and it hides more information about the performances of live streamers. Through texts, it is hard to know whether the performances of live streamers are appealing, funny, annoying, professional or amateur. Only by watching the performances can viewers better know whether the channels are worthy of subscribing to. Therefore, the second section of this chapter will examine the performance strategy of live streamers in self-branding.

Figure 2.11: LS 6’s personal tags and the statement of his computer configuration (Accessed: 11 January, 2019).



2.3 Performance Strategy: Routine and Non-routine Live Streamers

Live streamers put more efforts in their performances than using text strategy to attract viewers to subscribe to channels and stay in channels. In my participant observations, some live streamers host live streams with a set routine and some live streamers do not. The routine refers to the performances that live streamers frequently make. Having a routine or not displays the differences between live streamers in presenting themselves. Presenting self-image is a foundation for live streamers to keep connections with viewers. This section will select several live streamers as examples to illustrate the effects of having a routine or not in presenting self-image and

maintaining viewers. This section, therefore, will start with an examination on the routine live streamers, and then will examine one non-routine live streamer's four live streams. This section will end with a discussion on the effects of having a routine and no routine in live streamers' self-branding.

(i) Routine Live Streamer

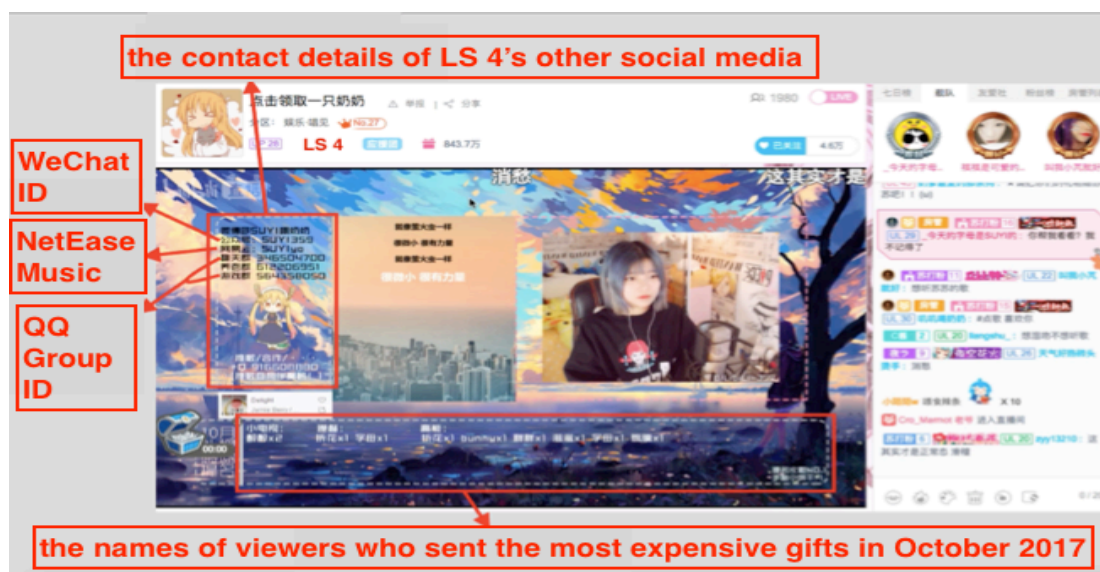
This section will introduce the routine live streamers and also examine the impacts of routine on their live stream channels. LS 4, who ranked the 27th in all singing live stream channels on the Bilibili Leaderboard of Live Streams in 2017, is one of the live streamers who hosts streams with a routine. Most LS 4's live streams present LS 4's singing and chatting with viewers, which constitute the routine of LS 4. This routine helped LS 4 get through the awkward moment when she did not know what to do at the start of her live stream. This section will refer to her live stream on October 20, 2017. In this live stream, as Figure 2.12 displays, the streaming section of LS 4's channel was decorated with three parts: the anime background paper, lyrics of songs and LS 4's image displayed through web-camera. The contact details of LS 4's other social media and the names of users who sent virtual gifts were listed on the anime background paper, as Figure 2.13 displays. The lyrics of the songs that LS 4 was singing displayed in the part of lyrics. Streamed by the web-camera, LS 4 wore a black hoodie and sat behind the microphone in a posters-decorated corner of a room. After LS 4 opened her channel and before LS 4 started her performance, 1,980 viewers came to her channel. LS 4 had a short chat with viewers, and she said she had to make "awkward smiles"¹² to get through this moment. LS 4 asked her viewers to recommend songs for her performances, saying "it's too awkward, please recommend songs for me to sing to get through this awkward start" (太尬了, 快推荐些歌给我唱吧; taigale, kuai tuijian xie ge geiwo chang ba).

Figure 2.12: Three parts of LS 4's channel (Accessed: 20 October, 2017).

¹² Awkward smile (尬笑, gaxiao) is a buzzword in Bilibili's live stream channels. It means that when individuals do not know what to say and feel awkward in the conversations with others, they have to smiles to get through this moment.



Figure 2.13: The contact details of LS 4's other social media, such as WeChat ID¹³, NetEase Music¹⁴ and QQ groups ID. The names of users who sent virtual gifts were also listed (Accessed: 20 October, 2017).



¹³ WeChat (微信, weixin) is a Chinese instant communication software supporting one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many literal chatting, voice calling and video calling, which was produced by Tencent Technology on January 21, 2011 (WeChat, 2019). Users also can deploy Wechat to publish information, moments, images and photos, and videos to other users, and they also can make payments on WeChat.

¹⁴ NetEase Music (网易云音乐, wangyi yun yinyue) is the Chinese music software functioning on computers, laptops, and mobile phones. The Chinese Internet technology company Netease (网易, wangyi) produced it. Netease provides various online services for users, such as online gaming, mobile news reading, email services, blogging, online education services and searching engine. NetEase Music is one of the services that Netease provides for users. Users can listen to the music within NetEase Music, and they can also upload and download their original created pieces of music by using the cloud service of NetEase Music.

The routine then guided LS 4 to perform in the rest time of her live stream. When the number of viewers climbed to around 4,000, LS 4 selected songs from viewers' recommendations and began to sing songs accompanied by the background music turned on by LS 4. While singing songs, LS 4 also kept eyes on viewers' comments. For example, LS 4 stopped singing and burst out laughing when she saw the comment from the viewer named Little King With Sword (仗剑小帝, zhangjian xiaodi), who said that "I thought it (this live stream) is about selling milk" (还以为是在卖牛奶的, haiyiwei shi mai niunai de) when Little King With Sword saw LS 4's channel name "click and collect milk" (点击领取一只奶奶, dianji lingqu yizhi nainai). LS 4 also reacted to viewers' gifting. For example, as Figure 2.14 shows, when LS 4 was singing, one viewer named Qiqi Is A Lovely Boy (琪琪是可爱的蓝孩纸, qiqi shi ke'ai de lanhaizhi) sent 225 "sweet osmanthus liquor"¹⁵ (桂花酒, guihua jiu). LS 4 thanked Qiqi Is A Lovely Boy with posing a heart-like hand gesture as Figure 2.14 shows. LS 4 also encouraged viewers to participate in her channel by telling viewers that she prepared homemade cookies as gifts for the viewer who would send the largest number of virtual gifts before the end of her live stream. She would ask this viewer to provide a mailing address after live streaming, and the homemade cookies will be emailed to this viewer. Throughout this live steam, LS 4 chatted with viewers, sang songs, reacted to viewers' comments and encouraged viewers to send virtual gifts. These actions constituted LS 4's routine.

Figure 2.14: LS 4 thanked Qiqi Is A Lovely Boy's virtual gifts with a heart-like hand gesture (Accessed: 20 October, 2017).

¹⁵ "Sweet osmanthus liquor" was a virtual gift only available during "the middle autumn festival activity" (中秋节活动, zhongqiujie huodong) from October 4, 2017, to October 31, 2017.



The routine contributes to the build of community spirit in LS 4's live stream channel. In this community spirit, members of the community share common assumptions, such as collective targets, ideas and reliefs (Colman, 1975). In most LS 4's live streams, when LS 4 sang songs, there were some viewers frequently repeated the comment of “★三二一★三二一★三二一”. This comment “★三二一★三二一★三二一” is a combined image merging the star image “★” and the Chinese words “三二一”, which means three two one (三二一, saneryi). This combined image is the common assumption that circulated between LS 4 and her viewers. As one of LS 4's subscribers named Spring Forever explained on October 18, 2017, the combined image of “★三二一★三二一★三二一” means shooting star, as Figure 2.15 displays, which was first mentioned by LS 4. “★三二一★三二一★三二一” is the shared assumption between LS 4 and her viewers: LS 4 first assumed the combined image “★三二一★三二一★三二一” as shooting stars, and then viewers who like LS 4's channel repeated it in LS 4's channel. This process of forming and performing the shared assumption shows that LS 4 and her viewers sharing a community spirit.

Figure 2.15: The conversation between the viewers on “★三二一★三二一★三二一”. A viewer named hhhhhGod (hhhhh 神, hhhhhhshen) commented “★三二一★三二一★三二一”, which was followed by a viewer named Drunk Qingyin (清吟醉醉, qingyin zuizui) asking why comment “★三二一” and what “★三二一” means. A viewer named Spring Forever answered the question. Taken from LS 4’s live stream channel on October 18, 2017 (Accessed: 18 October, 2017).



In other genres of live stream channels like gaming live stream channels, the routine also exists, but it occasionally hinders the communication between gaming live streamers and viewers. The gaming live streamers, such as LS 11’s, LS 12’s and LS 3’s, were more likely to focus on playing games instead of reading viewers’ comments. This section refers to LS 11’s and LS 12’s live streams. LS 11 and LS 12 are active gaming live streamers on Bilibili, and they usually spend four to five hours a day, or even longer, on their channels. Unlike LS 4, who encourages viewers to recommend performances, LS 11 and LS 12 prefer to settle the games to play before the start of live streaming. They always display the name of the game that they are going to play in the streaming section and briefly introduce the game at the start of live streaming. Then they begin playing the game and become less focused on viewers’ comments. Figure 2.16 displays the snapshot of LS 11’s live stream on playing a multiplayer online role-playing game Player Unknown’s Battlegrounds on March 5, 2017. In this live stream,

LS 11's gaming filled the streaming section. On the right side of the streaming section is the comment section, where LS 11's viewers were commenting to remind LS 11 to collect helmet and painkiller, both of which are important equipment and material in this game. Figure 2.17 shows a snapshot of LS 12's live stream on October 13, 2017. Same as LS 11's live stream on March 5, 2017, the streaming section of LS 12's channel was streamed with LS 12's gaming. In this live stream, LS 12 did not make any response to viewers' gifting when LS 12 won the game and started a new round of the game. In these two live streams, both LS 11 and LS 12 focused more on gaming instead of reading viewers comments and gifts.

Figure 2.16: Viewers' comments of reminding LS 11 to collect the helmet and the painkiller that LS 11 passed by in playing the multiplayer online role-playing game Player Unknown's Battlegrounds on March 5, 2017 (Accessed: 5 March, 2017).

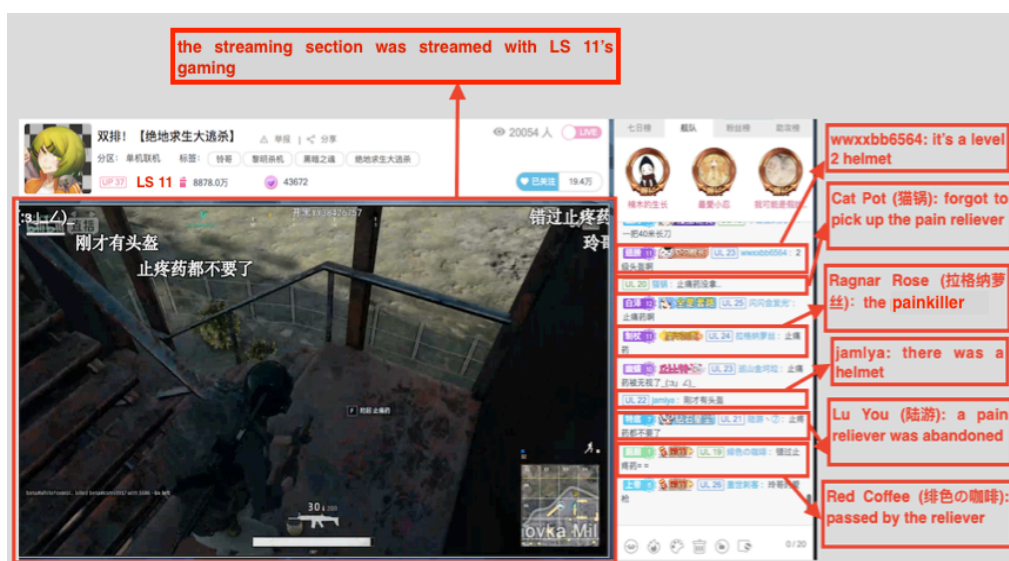
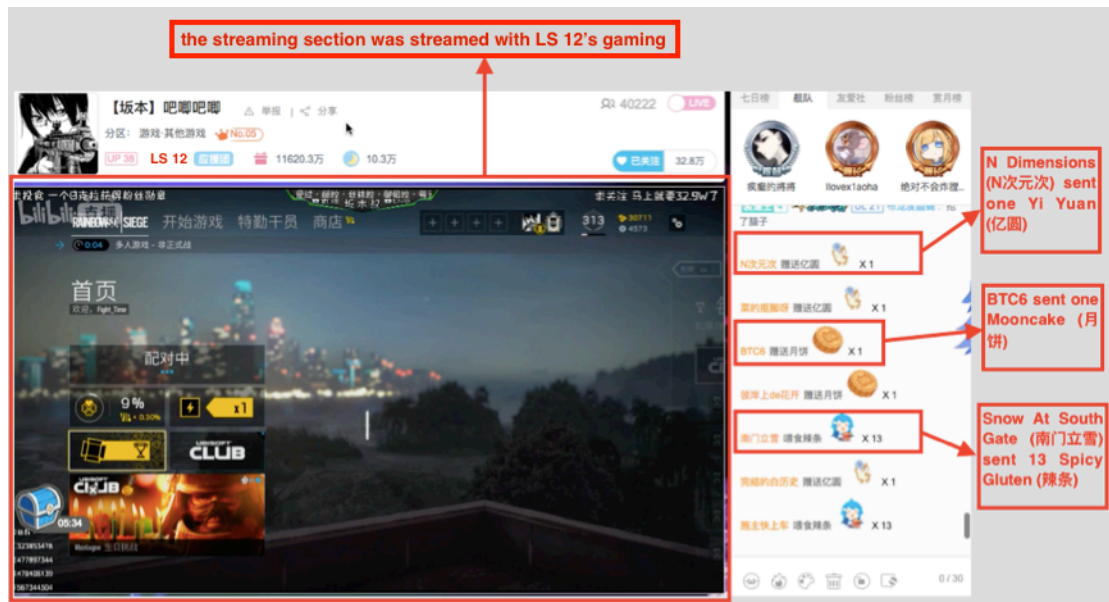


Figure 2.17: LS 12's viewers sent virtual gifts to him when LS 12 won the game and started a new round of game (Accessed October 13, 2017).



The reality is much more nuanced as gaming live streamers turn to read viewers' comments in some situations, which creates a conversation between gaming live streamers and viewers. Gaming live streamers turn to viewers' comments for suggestions during gaming, especially when they playing the new games and do not know how to win the games. It means having a conversation with viewers is not a fundamental issue in gaming live streamers' routine. For example, on May 25, 2017, when LS 11 lost the game, LS 11 screamed out and asked his viewers for suggestions, saying "Oh no! What happened? Why did I die? Has anyone played this game before? Could you give some advice?" (哦不!发生了什么?我怎么死了?有谁玩过这游戏吗?能给我些建议吗? obu! fasheng le shenme? youshui wanguo zhe youxi ma? neng geiwo xie jianyi ma?). This behaviour constitutes an integral part of the routine of LS 11, which creates the opportunity to chat with viewers. Otherwise, gaming live streamers, like LS 11 and LS 12, will focus more on gaming rather than communicating with viewers.

For gaming live streamers on Bilibili, as far as I have observed, uploading gaming videos is also a part of the routine. It attracts new viewers and retains old viewers. Every time LS 11 and LS 12 play new games in their channels, they would like to record live streams, make these recordings into videos, and upload the videos to their personal spaces on Bilibili. New viewers

who are interested in the games that LS 11 and LS 12 played or old viewers who want to review LS 11's and LS 12's live streams, they can watch these recordings. For example, Figure 2.18 is a screenshot of a part of LS 12's personal space on Bilibili, which displays the recordings of his live streams that have been uploaded by LS 12. As Figure 2.18 shows, every uploaded recording is tagged with the date and the number of clicks (点击数, dianjishu). The selected video in the box in Figure 2.18 is the recording of LS 12's live stream hosted on October 13, 2017, in which LS 12 played a multiplayer online role-playing shooter game *Escape From Tarkov*. This live stream of LS 12 on October 13, 2017, is one of my participant observations on LS 12. Around seven months later since uploaded, this video had received around 66,000 clicks and 820 viewers' comments. It means that the recording video of the live stream also attract new viewers and retain old viewers. For instance, at the beginning of this video as Figure 2.19 shows, a viewer commented "I watched LS 12 playing this game in his channel" (在现场, zai xianchang), and at the end of this video as Figure 2.20 shows, when LS 12 shoot down two of his adversaries in the game, a viewer commented with "cool live streamer, I have subscribed to the channel" (爆菊主播, 关注了; baoju zhubo, guanzhu le) (Uncle Banben, 2017b). This example shows two different types of viewers. One is the old viewer who watched LS 12's live stream on October 13, 2017, and the other is the new viewer who was attracted by LS 12's recording of live streams to subscribe LS 12's channel.

Figure 2.18: A screenshot of a part of LS 12's uploaded recordings of live streams (Accessed: 8 May, 2018).

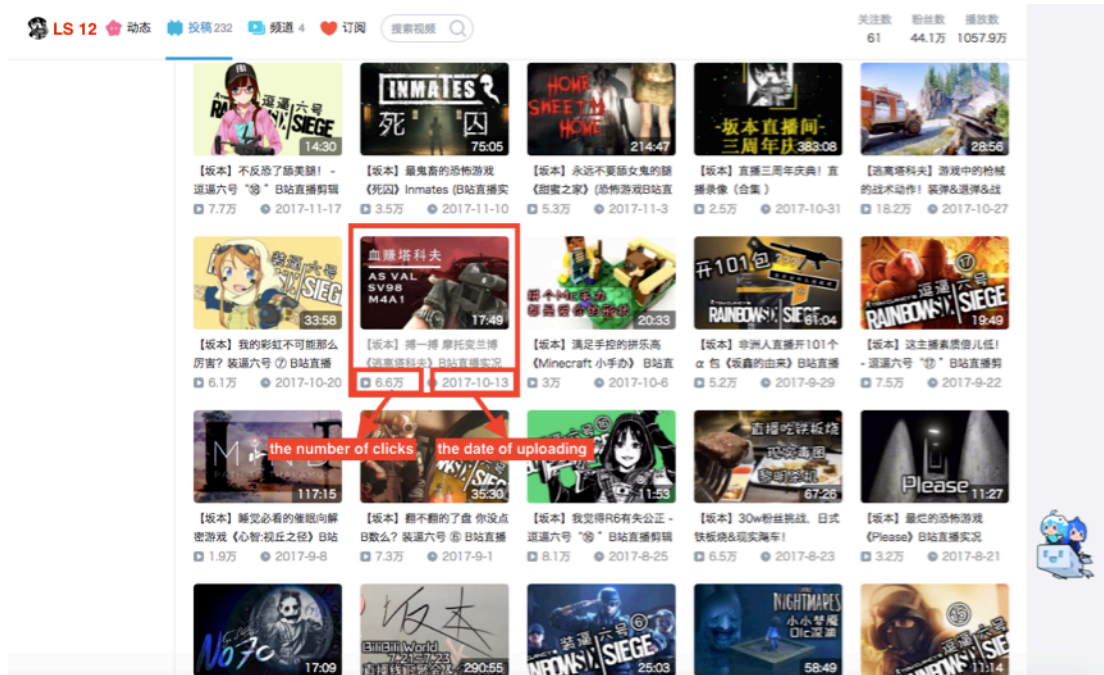
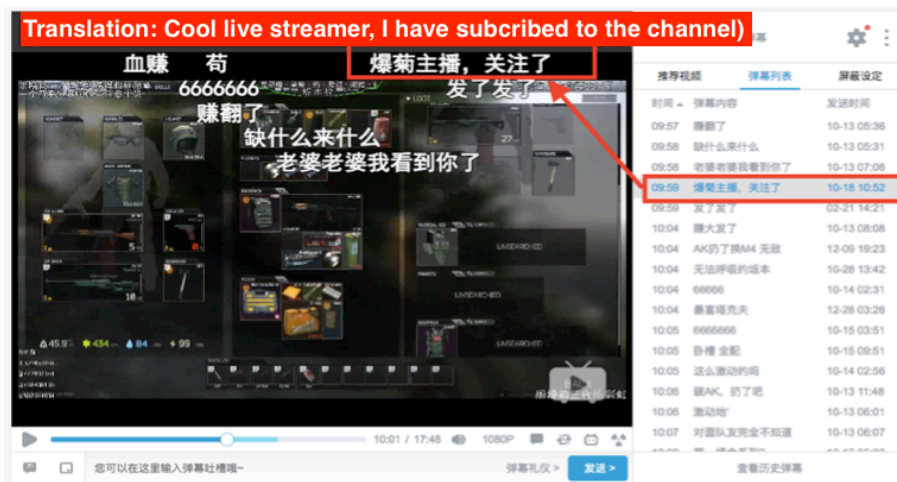


Figure 2.19: A viewer's comment appeared at the start of LS 12's recording of live stream that uploaded on October 13, 2017 (Accessed: 8 May, 2018).



Figure 2.20: A viewer's comment appeared at the end of LS 12's recording of live stream that uploaded on October 13, 2017 (Accessed: 8 May, 2018).



(ii) Non-routine Live Streamer

Unlike LS 4, LS 11 and LS 12 who have routines, LS 10 has no routine in her channel. But, it still brings LS 10 the popularity, such as the overwhelming praise and the high number of viewers during LS 10's live streaming. LS 10 is a singing live streamer, but she performs more than singing. She often changes the content of live streams, which include singing, chatting, gaming, cosplaying and ASMR. She wants to attract and retain viewers, as she introduces in her Bilibili personal space that "May I have your company with my sound and smile?" (用我的声音和笑容换你一份陪伴, 好吗? yong wode shengyin he xiaorong huan ni yifen peiban, haoma?) As a result, the content of LS 10's live streams is not settled. This thesis refers to her live streams on four days. The first live stream was hosted on September 26, 2017. In this live stream, the stream section was constituted of two parts. One was the web-camera part, and the other was the text and image part. As Figure 2.21 shows, in the web-camera part, LS 10 wore a frog-anime headgear and sat behind the microphone in a room decorated by several dolls. In the text and image part, the pink words at the right side displayed LS 10's contact details of other social media, and the white words at the left side displayed the target of receiving virtual gifts during the national holidays of National Day (国庆节, guoqingjie) and Mid-Autumn Festival (中秋节, zhong qiu jie) from September 28, 2017, to October 12, 2017. The rest of the text and image part displayed the number of virtual gifts that LS 10 had received from last live streaming and the anime images of a girl and a rabbit. In this live stream, LS 10 dubbed over

the voices of anime characters from the multiplayer online game League of Legends after she said she “was tired of singing” (唱腻了, changnile).

Figure 2.21: The decoration of LS 10's streaming section on September 26, 2017 (Accessed: 26 September, 2017).



The second live stream that this thesis refers to is the one LS 10 hosted on September 27, 2017, which brought LS 10 many positive comments from viewers. While cosplaying the female anime character, Shōko Nishimiya, of a Japanese anime movie called *A Silent Voice*, LS 10 sang songs and chatted with viewers. As Figure 2.22 shows, LS 10 wore a white shirt with the blue tie and the light pink hairpiece, which looked like the costume of female character Shōko Nishimiya in *A Silent Voice* as Figure 2.23 shows. Viewers' positive comments overwhelmed the negative comments on LS 10's cosplaying and singing. Few viewers criticised LS 10's cosplaying. For example, the viewer called My ID Is It (我的id是这个, wode ID shi zhege) said “it does not look like Shōko Nishimiya hahaha but an awkward Shōko Nishimiya” (一点也不像哈哈但是强行哨子, yidian ye buxiang hahaha danshi qiangxing shaozi) and the viewer called Sunshine Forest (阳林呐, yanglin na) said “the hairpiece is a little bit light, but looks good” (发色有点浅, 但是好看, fase youdian qian, danshi haokan). Most comments, as Figure 2.22 shows, praised LS 10's cosplaying and singing by commenting “your face looks better than Shōko Nishimiya's” (西宫销子脸没这么好看, xigong xiaozi lian mei

zheme haokan), “your singing is better” (唱歌更好听, changge geng haoting), and “nice singing, nice singing, nice singing” (好听好听好听, haoting haoting haoting).

Figure 2.22: LS 10 was cosplaying and singing in live stream, and some viewers was commenting on her performance (Accessed: 27 September, 2017).



Figure 2.23: The poster of the Japanese anime movie *A Silent Voice*. The box shows the female character Shōko Nishimiya, which was cosplayed by LS 10 in the live stream on September 27, 2017 (Accessed: 19 May, 2017).



The third live stream that this thesis refers to is the one LS 10 hosted on October 2, 2017. LS 10 did an outdoor live stream after attending an ACG exhibition (漫展, manzhan) in Nanchang (南昌市, Nanchangshi), which is the capital city of Jiangxi Province (江西省, xiangjisheng) in eastern China. This live stream brought 20,063 viewers, the highest in my participant observation on LS 10's live stream channel. The reason that LS 10 kept this large number of viewers was that this outdoor live stream produced many chat topics, such as why LS 10 did an outdoor live stream and what LS 10 was going to do in the outdoor live stream. These made viewers active in LS 10's channel. In this outdoor live stream on October 2, 2017, LS 10 told her viewers that she finished performance on the ACG exhibition during the day time and wanted to record the rest of the day in Nanchang by live streaming. At the start of her live stream, LS 10 stood at the historical tourism building Tengwang Pavilion (滕王阁, tengwangge) with a smartphone to host the live stream. She told her viewers that she was going to have a meal in the business centre of Qiushui Square (秋水广场, qiushui guangchang). Some of her viewers commented that they lived in Nanchang and some said they knew Tengwang Pavilion and Qiushui Square. Some of LS 10's viewers even suggested the viewers who stayed or lived in Nanchang to meet LS 10 in the Qiushui Square, as Figure 2.24 shows. In Figure 2.24, a viewer named Long Angelo Nancy (朗琪罗 Nancy, langqiluo Nancy) commented that "(I) want to meet LS 10, but I'm a little shy...(想 gank LS 10, 但是有点害羞...; xiang gank LS 10, danshi youdian haixiu), and the viewer called Big Dream Autumn (梦秋大大, mengqiu dada) followed to comment that "I think I can call a cab to the Qiushui Square" (我认为我得打车去秋水广场, woren wodei dache qu qiushui guangchang). The viewer named Shadow Cat Home's Sky Blue (影喵家の海蓝, Yingmiaojia de hailan) commented that "guys in Nanchang have a chance to meet Crazy Hua" (南昌的小哥哥快去接小婊, Nanchang de xiaogege kuaiqu jie xiaohua). From these comments, it is easy to find that LS 10's introducing the plan in Nanchang intrigued viewers in commenting.

Figure 2.24: Viewers' comments in LS 10's live stream on October 2, 2017 (Accessed: 2 October, 2017).



The last live stream that this thesis refers to is the one hosted on October 11, 2017, in which LS 10 introduced her plan for the upcoming graduation from university in 2018. This chatting live stream, from the start to the end, attracted LS 10 a high of 13,336 viewers. In this live stream, LS 10 wore a black hoodie, sat in front of the web-camera and talked to her viewers that after graduation she wanted to open a doll shop where customers could use claw crane to catch dolls. She said, “the feeling of catching a doll is different from buying a doll online, and this must be very popular” (亲手抓的感觉肯定和网上买的不一样, 这肯定很赚钱; qinshou zhua de ganjue kending he wangshang mai de buyiyang, zhe kending hen zhuanqian). Viewers followed to comment. A viewer named Naruto Fan Cao (火影人 Cao, huoyingren Cao) laughed at this plan, saying “you catch dolls, and you exhaust all dolls in your shop haha” (一边夹一边玩没了再拿哈哈, yibian jia yibian wan meile zaina ha ha). The viewer named Dumb Cute Lonely Cold (呆萌的孤冷, daimeng de guleng) agreed, saying “I’m afraid once you open up a doll shop, you will catch dolls all the time” (怕是你开了之后, 每天围在旁边拼命夹, pashi ni kaile zhihou, meitian weizai pangbian pinming jia). The viewer called Ink Tree el (墨树 el, moxin el) suggested that “opening an Internet café near schools must make a huge fortune” (网咖开到学校附近一定大赚特赚, wangka kaidao xuexiao fujin yiding dazhuan tezhuang).

Figure 2.25: Viewers' comments on LS 10's future plan (Accessed: 11 October, 2017).



The four live streams of LS 10 on four days display the efforts that LS 10 has invested in changing content to attract and retain viewers. LS 10 did not brand her self as a live streamer who was particularly interested in one genre of content or good at one performance, but she took the strategy of changing content to attract and retain viewers. This performance strategy also brought a large number of viewers and kept viewers active in commenting. In these four examples of LS 10's live streams that this thesis has referred to, viewers of LS 10's live streams always communicated with LS 10 and commented on LS 10's various performances. As a result, with the help of content changing, LS 10 was successful in attracting viewers, and LS 10 consistently listed at a high place of the daily leaderboard of singing channels in 2017 (Bilibili, 2017c). For example, the live stream of dubbing over game characters' voices on September 26, 2017, made LS 10 list at the 35th place on Bilibili's daily leaderboard of singing channels. With the cosplaying live stream on September 27, 2017, LS 10 listed at the 24th place on the daily leaderboard of singing channels. With the outdoor live stream of October 2, 2017, LS 10 ranked the 7th on the same leaderboard. On average, LS 10 could attract more than 11,000 viewers to watch her channel each time she hosted a live stream.

With discussing the influences of live streamers' whether or not deploying a routine to attract and retain viewers, it is easy to find that having a routine is a necessary but not sufficient strategy for live streamers to maintain their small communities of channels better. It means that having a routine is only a method for live streamers to keep viewers stay in channels. For live streamers like LS 4, LS 11 and LS 12, having a routine is necessary because they can attract and retain viewers through regularly doing the performances they are good at. The viewers that LS 4 has attracted and retained are more likely the ones interested in singing songs or listening to music, while those that LS 11 and LS 12 have attracted and retained are highly likely interested in gaming. These viewers gathered in the channels and small communities formed, in which the community spirit developed in the shared common assumptions between live streamers and viewers, such as “★三二一★三二一★三二一” in LS 4's channel. The live streamers who have no routine also attract and retain viewers. They attract viewers with different content tastes. For example, LS 10 has to invest more effort in changing her channel's content. LS 10 has tried dubbing over the voices of anime characters, cosplaying, outdoor live streaming and introducing the future plan, and these efforts brought LS 10 a success in ranking high on Bilibili's daily leaderboard of singing channels. Thus, having a routine or not is only a self-branding strategy that live streamers can take, and it does not make a big divide in live streamers' attracting and retaining viewers.

2.4 Summary of Chapter Two

This chapter mainly illustrated two strategies of live streamers' self-branding in live stream channels with an examination on the effects of these two strategies in attracting and retaining viewers. Live streamers who deployed the text strategy like LS 11, LS 2, LS 9 and LS 1 usually put self-introductions, personal tags or a text of persuading viewers to subscribe to the channel. These three types of text strategy helped live streamers to create an impression about the channels to viewers, especially to the new viewers. These types of text strategy are insufficient in advertising when implicit self-

introductions and abstract personal tags are made by live streamers, such as LS 6's tags left a question of what his channel is. This limitation of the text strategy is made up of the performance strategy. Performance strategy is a strategy of live streamers to attract and retain viewers with performance. Performance is the main activity that live streamers do in live stream channels. Some live streamers host live streams with a routine, and some live streamers do not have a routine. For the routine live streamers, a routine helped live streamers construct small communities in channels and build community spirit. A routine, however, can also hinder live streamers communicating with viewers, especially for the gaming live streamers like LS 11 and LS 12 who spend most of their effort, attention and time on winning games. For non-routine live streamer, changing content also brings them a large number of viewers, and it makes viewers comment on live streamers' changing performances.

A critical issue was found in participant observation. That is, the ACG elements have been widely used in live streamers' self-branding strategies. It shows the recognition of live streamers to the ACG culture. The ACG elements in live stream channels also present live streamers' various ACG interests. ACG elements were displayed in the streaming section, such as LS 4's and LS 10's using anime background papers and anime images to decorate their channels. They were also used as the content of the live stream, for example, LS 11 and LS 12 playing online games in their channels. LS 10 further cosplayed the anime character and also dubbed over the voices of anime characters. These suggested that live streamers are not shy to show their ACG interests to viewers through web-camera and to introduce their ACG interests to viewers in channels. The ACG elements helped live streamers to attract new viewers and retain old viewers to stay in the live stream channels. This suggests that ACG elements may be the assumption that both live streamers and viewers share in the small communities of live stream channels. When live streamers perform or introduce one of the ACG elements, the viewers with the same ACG interest will come and make comments. Therefore, the community spirit forms in each live stream channel.

This thesis also found that cuteness is an ACG identity that live streamers have expressed. Both male and female live streamers perform cuteness. This blurs the gender stereotype that only females could show cuteness, which weakens the gender disparity on Bilibili. The cuteness on Bilibili is called meng (萌), which is a term from the Japanese term moe. Moe in Japanese describes an image of cute, pure and fragile feminine anime character or a game character (Azuma, 2009, p.43). It is more like an aesthetic concept that “firmly rooted in visual commodity culture” (Sianne Ngai, 2005). Although moe is usually to describe a female anime character, the phrase “feminine” does not mean the anime figure must be a female. Instead, it means this anime figure can be a male behaving, talking or making up like a female. This leads to the performance of cuteness in cosplaying by both female and male live streamers on Bilibili. In the singing and dancing channels, live streamers are more likely to use the web-camera to perform cuteness, wearing anime character’s costume and chatting with viewers. LS 7, who is a live streamer performing the ACG dancing on Bilibili, made a costume in her live stream on September 21, 2017, and she said she would wear this costume to record an ACG dancing video. LS 10 also cosplayed the leading actress of the animation movie *A Silent Voice* in her live stream on September 27, 2017, which won praises from many viewers. LS 11 is a male live streamer and he also cosplayed a female anime character in his live stream, which received praise from his viewers.

Another issue that is found in this thesis is that the live streamers are highly concerned about their appearance, and viewers have different attitudes to the natural look of live streamers. In the dancing and singing channels, some female live streamers, who show their images to the audiences through the web-camera, usually pay attention to their dressing and make-ups. For example, LS 10 usually dressed in cute costumes for cosplaying, and LS 4 wore make-ups in every live stream. In the live stream on October 17, 2017, one of LS 10’s viewers said that the face of LS 10 was a little big, which made LS 10 reluctant to use the web-camera anymore on that date. However, in the gaming channel, without using web-camera, viewers seldom mentioned the

gaming live streamers' natural look, and their focus more on the game and the fun that the gaming live streamers brought to them. The different requirements in different channels might cause the gender disparity in viewers' comments. The gaming channel usually requires live streamers to focus on the games, and they do not have to pay much attention to communicating with viewers through web-camera. The singing and dancing live streamers, however, usually have to do much communication through web-camera. Using the web-camera enables viewers to see their facial expressions, which make communication more alive and vivid.

Viewers are the receivers of content. Their activities and comments in live stream channels are important in mastering whether the self-branding strategies of live streamers are successful. It is also significant in mastering how viewers contribute to the construction of the Bilibili online community. The following chapter, therefore, will explain viewers' participation, such as commenting and gifting, in building community spirit in live stream channels with examples and details discovered from the participant observation.

Chapter Three: Three Groups of Viewers and Their Participation

The existing studies have found that the community spirit forms in viewers' participation in live streaming sites, such as YouTube Live, Facebook Live and Twitch (Hamilton, Garretson and Kerne, 2014; Haimson and Tang, 2017; Recktenwald, 2017). Here, community spirit is the sense of belonging of viewers to the live stream channel. It develops from viewers' likes and dislikes and their recognition of insiders and outsiders. Viewers play an important role in live stream channels, because "the interaction's impact depends on comments volume, comment content and relationship between viewers and broadcaster" (Haimson and Tang, 2017, p. 48). Viewers' gifting, commenting and other forms of participation promote the senses of sociability, sharing and engagement among viewers (Haimson and Tang, 2017; Recktenwald, 2017). Viewers even challenge the leading role of live streamers in live stream channels by suspending the live streaming with making meaningless comments (Karhulahti, 2016). These activities of viewers demarcate the insiders and outsiders in live stream channels (Hamilton, Garretson and Kerne, 2014).

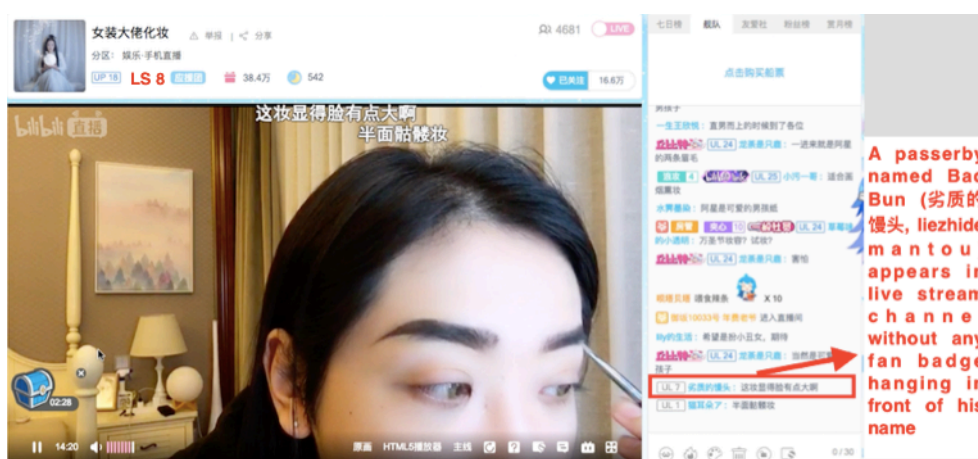
Like other live streaming sites, the participation of viewers on Bilibili is also important in constructing community spirit. This chapter is not to indicate whether the viewers' community spirit in Bilibili's live stream channels is stronger or weaker than others' in other live streaming sites, but to provide an ethnographic scope of understanding viewers' participation within Bilibili's community rules and regulations. What kind of participation do viewers do in live stream channels? How do they define insiders and outsiders, how do insiders and outsiders respond to live streamers' performances? How do viewers exploit the rules and regulations of Bilibili to maintain community spirit in live stream channels? To answer these questions, this chapter will classify the viewers into three groups based on their different participation in the selected twelve live stream channels. They are the passer-by (路人, luren), subscriber and on-board subscriber (船员, chuanyuan). The passer-by and subscriber are not unique to Bilibili, and they are also active on other live streaming sites, such as Twitch and YouTube. The group of on-board

subscriber develops from the Bilibili gift system called Big Voyage (大航海, da hanghai). This chapter will explain different activities of three groups of viewers by discussing the similarities and disparities in Bilibili live stream channels. It will understand the path of how community spirit, community rules and community boundary work in live stream channels. A summary of viewers' participation will, therefore, include at the end of this chapter.

3.1 Passer-by: Come, Watch, and Leave

A passer-by, which names as luren (路人), is a viewer who does not follow a live streamer. A passer-by usually comes to channels without fan badge (粉丝勋章, fensi xunzhang) or with the fan badge of other live streamers. The fan badge is a sign displaying this viewer is a fan of a live streamer, as Figure 3.1 shows. A passer-by usually comes to the channel, watches live streamer's performance and leaves. Some passers-by stay quietly in the channels and making no comments on live streamer's performance, while some passers-by do not. The passers-by who make comments in channels are easy to be noticed, and some of them may tend to troll.

Figure 3.1: A passer-by named Inferior Bun (劣质的馒头, liezhide mantou) made comment in LS 8's channel, without showing the fan badge in front of his username (Accessed: 12 October, 2017).



Trolling is an online behaviour that some Internet users ask questions or make comments to infuriate others in online communities. Trolling is a

sword that has two sides in constructing an online community. On the one side, trolling is annoying and undesirable. The Internet users who conduct trolling are called trolls, and trolls show their self-interest to the detriment of others (Buckels, Trapnell and Paulhus, 2014). In this process, trolls gain attention and a sense of self-empowerment but consume the effort and time of online community members to identify and deal with (Herring, Job-Sluder, Scheckler and Barab, 2002). This is because trolling starts with the pretence of trolls being a regular member of the community (Cruz, Seo, and Rex, 2018). On the other side, however, trolling can unite online community members. In the process of identifying trolls and dealing with trolling, online community members repeat community rules. It promotes members' engagement and mutual interaction (Cruz, Seo, and Rex, 2018).

The two sides of trolling also exist in Bilibili's live stream channels. This section will look at the activities of passers-by in one particular live stream to understand the influences of activities of passers-by on constructing community spirit in Bilibili live stream channels. This live stream is LS 8's make-up live stream on October 12, 2017. The reason to choose this particular live stream is that there was a debate between LS 8 and the passers-by who did trolling and a quarrel between the passers-by who did troll and other viewers. This trolling occupied much time in LS 8's make-up live stream. The total length of LS 8's make-up live stream is around sixty minutes, and the trolling lasted around twenty-five minutes, which occupied over two-thirds of the total length of LS 8's live stream. This situation was not found in other live stream channels. This incident in LS 8's live stream provided details of trolls and trolling, such as the characteristics of the passers-by who troll, the process of passers-by conduct trolling, the reactions of live streamers and other viewers, and the influence of trolling on the channel. This section will first introduce the activities of passers-by and then illustrate how some passers-by made trolling and how other viewers counterattacked. This section will also highlight the impact of trolling and how trolling drawing a gap between insiders and outsiders. A discussion will draw to explain the claim that trolls still exist and violate Bilibili's community rules called barrage

etiquette (弹幕礼仪, danmu liyi) because the anonymity of usernames provided shelter for trolls. This section will end with an argument that anonymity may become a potential obstacle for Bilibili to manage its online community in the future.

Most passers-by are polite to live streamers and other viewers. For example, most viewers of LS 8's make-up live stream made friendly comments. When LS 8 was doing make-up, a passer-by who did not wear LS 8's fan badge named Rice Pudding Seed C (粽籽 C, zongziC) praised LS 8's make-up, saying "it impressed me" (惊艳到我了, jingyan dao wo le), and another passer-by named Alpaca Person-Alpaca (羊驼君-alpaca, yangtuojun-alpaca) commented, saying "it is so pretty, I can't help to praise it" (太好看了, 可劲表白; tai haokan le, kejing biao bai). Some passers-by also asked questions about the tools that LS 8 used. A passer-by called Remiremi asked LS 8 that "may I ask which brand the concealer is?" (请问一下, 用的遮瑕膏是什么呢; qingwen yixia, axing yongde zhexiagao shi shenme ne), and another passer-by called A Big Bite of Chicken (大口吃黄焖鸡吧, dakou chi huangmenji ba) asked that "which brand of eyeliner are you using?" (这个眼线笔是什么牌子呢, zhege yanxianbi shi shenme paizi ne). Similar praises on LS 8's make-up and questions about LS 8's make-up tools constituted the most comments of viewers in LS 8's live stream on October 12, 2017.

However, some passers-by can be a source of annoyance for live streamers. These passers-by are not polite and friendly to live streamers and even criticise the performance of live streamers without asking what the live streamers are doing. On October 12, 2017, several passers-by who did troll commented on LS 8's make-up live stream. It started with the comment of a passer-by called Inferior Bun (劣质的馒头, liezhide mantou). Shortly after LS 8 started doing her makeup, Inferior Bun commented, saying "this make-up makes your face look big" (这个妆显得脸有点大啊, zhegezhuang xiande lian youdian da a). Around thirty seconds later, LS 8 read Inferior Bun's comment and responded to Inferior Bun, as Figure 3.2 displays. LS 8 looked straight at

the screen, saying “I just want to ask you a question, did I end up making up? How could you say it makes my face look big?” (我就想问你说，我现在这个妆画完了吗？你就说我显得脸大？ wo jiuxiang wenni shuo, wo xianzai zhege zhuang huawanlema? Nijiushuo wo xiande lianda?) LS 8 was infuriated by Inferior Bun’s comment. LS 8 explained to her viewers that “I really don’t like people making impolite comments before I finish doing make-up” (我特别讨厌我这个妆还没画完，你就开始指指点点, wo tebie taoyan wo zhegezhuang haimei huawan, niju kaishi zhizhidiandian). Some trolls followed, as Figure 3.3 displays. A passer-by named LixunXiaobaoAeeeeeee (栗旬小包 Aeeeeeee, lixun xiaobao Aeeeeeee) commented on LS 8’s make-up, saying “the eyeliner is not good” (眼线没画好, yanxian mei huahao), and another passer-by named 36149 commented, saying “you are pretty but you look ugly with make-ups” (本来很漂亮画丑了, benlai henpiaoliang huachoule). These comments infuriated LS 8. LS 8 shouted at the screen, saying “could you stop judging?” (你们能不能别逼逼了, ni nengbuneng bie bibi le), “did I finish doing make-up?” (画完了吗, huawanlema?), and “you look insane” (一个个跟有病似的, yigege gen youbing shide).

Figure 3.2: LS 8 looked straight at the screen and responded to Inferior Bun’s comment (Accessed: 12 October, 2017).

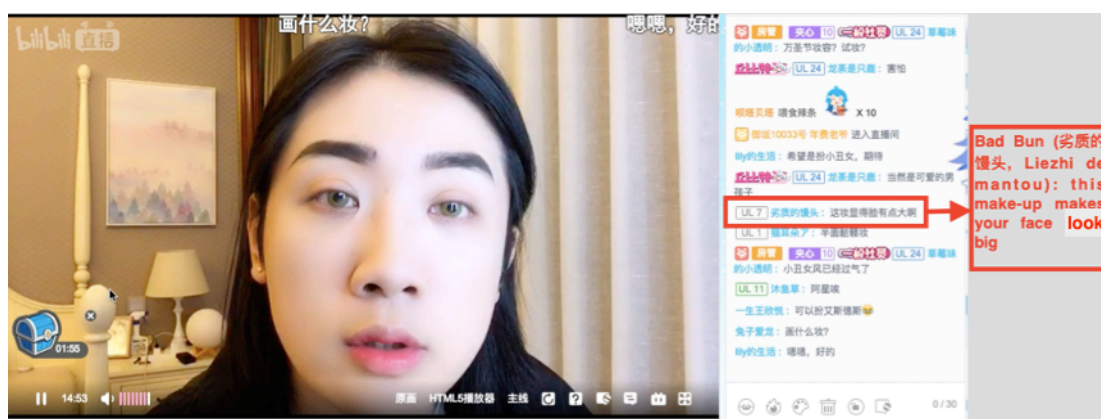
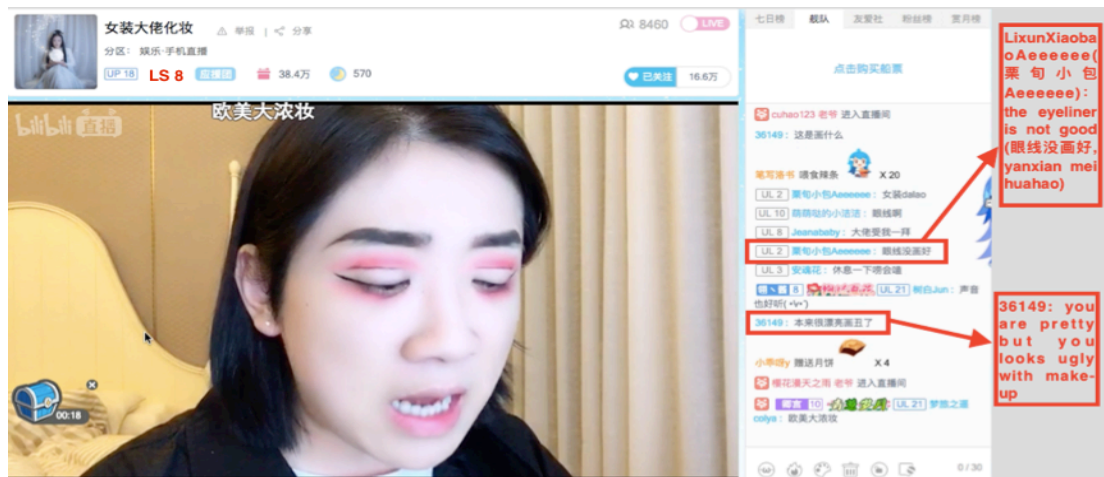


Figure 3.3: The comments of trolls infuriated LS 8 (Accessed: 12 October, 2017).

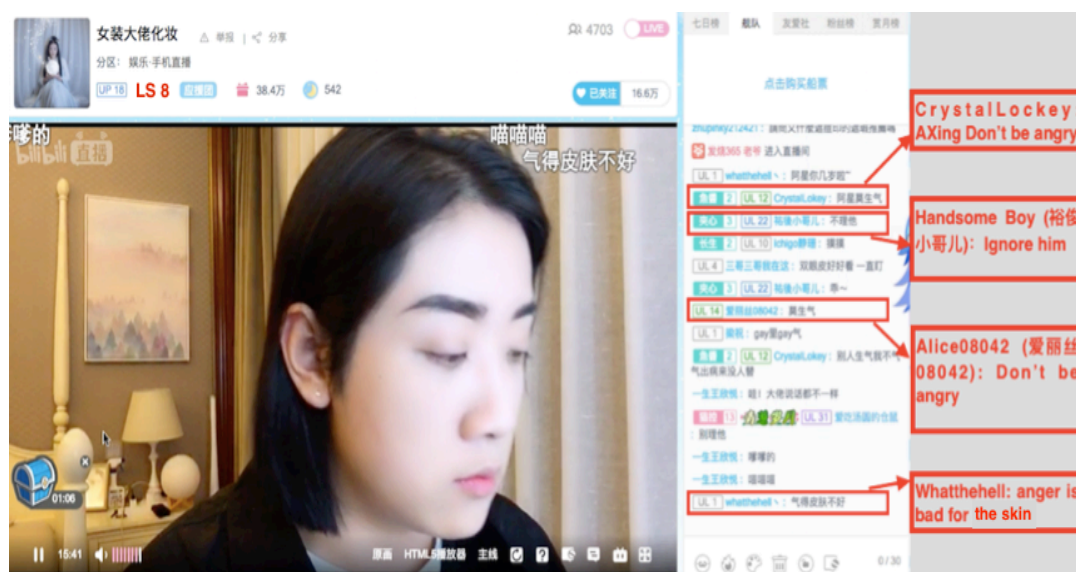


Contrary to the idea that rude comments sometimes imply the candour of community members as a mark of their authenticity (Massanari, 2015, p. 64), most users of Bilibili regard the rude comments as offensive and impolite to live streamers and other viewers. This is due to that trolls violate Bilibili's barrage etiquette (弹幕礼仪, danmu liyi). Barrage etiquette is the set of rules requiring users making comments with respect and politeness (Ikamusume, 2013). This barrage etiquette is not listed in any community rules or guidelines that Bilibili has published. However, a test of barrage etiquette will be encountered when a user wishes to successfully pass the community exam of Bilibili and become a formal user. The barrage etiquette seems an embodiment of Bilibili's expectation to create "a harmonious, healthy, and positive live streaming circumstance" (良好的直播环境与积极向上的直播氛围, lianghaode zhibo huanjing yu jijixiangshang de zhibo fenwei) (Bilibili, 2015a). The principle of barrage etiquette is to protect every user freely expressing their opinions when watching live streams with respect rather than offence (以尊重彼此、不侵害他人利益为前提, 尊重言论自由; yi zunzhong bici, buqinhai taren liyi wei qianti, zunzhong yanlun ziyou) (Ikamusume, 2013).

Having the barrage etiquette, the supporters of live streamers could counterattack the passers-by who troll. The process of counterattacking trolls has stages. The first stage is to comfort the live streamer. In LS 8's case on October 12, 2017, the trolling on LS 8's natural look and make-up not only upset LS 8 but also infuriated the viewers who supported LS 8. After the

passer-by called Inferior Bun commented on LS 8's make-up, some viewers came out to support and comfort LS 8. Figure 3.4 shows four viewers' commented on comforting LS 8. One passer-by named CrytalLokey with the fan badge of another live streamer was the first viewer to comfort LS 8, saying "don't be angry" (莫生气, moshengqi). This was followed by two viewers who wore the fan badge of LS 8 called Handsome Boy (裕俊小哥儿, yujun xiaogeer) and Have Heart (夹心, jiaxin), saying "ignore him" (不理他, buli ta). Then, a passer-by named Alice08042 (爱丽丝 08042, ailisi08042) commented, saying "don't be angry" (莫生气, mo shengqi). Another passer-by named Whatthell commented, saying "anger is bad for the skin" (气得皮肤不好, qide pifu buhao). After these comments comforting LS 8, LS 8 did not make further responses to the trolls.

Figure 3.4: Four supporters commented to comfort LS 8 (Accessed: 12 October, 2017).



The second stage of supporters' counterattack is to report to Bilibili's administrators or ask the channel administrators, who are nominated by the live streamers to keep the channel in sequence, to prohibit trolls from further commenting. In LS 8's case, when LS 8 faced the trolling of two passers-by called LixunXiaobaoAeeeeeee and 36149, supporters of LS 8 encouraged other viewers to report the trolls to Bilibili's administrator. They also called LS

8's channel administrators to prohibit trolls in further commenting in this channel. Some supporters like pppppppppenny and FuYiqing (傅亦卿, fuyiqing) made comments, saying "channel administrators, please ban him" (房管来封人吧, fangguan lai fengren ba) and "we need channel administrators" (呼叫房管, hujiao fangguan). Supporters like pppppppppenny, pressed the bottom of "report this comment" (举报选中弹幕, jubao xuanzhong danmu) and said that "already reported the viewer who is leading the trolling" (带节奏的已举报, daijiezou de yijubao).

When trolls' comments are overloaded and have not been cleared in the comment section, either because the channel administrator is absent or Bilibili's administrators prohibit trolls commenting is not quick enough, the supporters' counterattack will arrive at the third stage. That is the stage of quarrelling with trolls. The quarrel classifies live streamer, trolls and other viewers into two groups. One is the group of trolls who continue making unfriendly comments, and the other group is of the live streamer and other viewers who are against trolls. In LS 8's case, LS 8's channel administrators were absent, and LS 8 was busy with doing make-up and had no time to prohibit trolling. When supporters of LS 8 found the channel administrators were absent and the trolling continued, supporters voluntarily stood on the side of LS 8 and helped LS 8 to drive away from the unfriendly trolls. After the second round of trolling from passers-by called LixunXiaobaoAeeeeeee and 36149, the trolling did not stop. The passer-by named 36149 continued to make a comment, saying "eyes look swelled with make-up" (眼睛画肿了, yanjing huazhongle), and another passer-by named So I Don't Like Eating Rice (所以说我不爱吃米饭, suoyishuo wo buaichi mifan) commented, saying "this make-up is not pretty, why I can't say so" (本来就难看还不让说, benlaijiu nankan haiburang shuo). LS 8 was infuriated. She threw a make-up tool to the camera, which created a big sound, and said to the web-camera that "if you are good at doing make-up, then you do it (你画的好, 你过来画啊; ni huadehao, ni laihua a)". Then LS 8 angrily complained to the web-camera, saying "today, I just try to do a new make-up, and after I know how to do it, I

will record a make-up video. These idiots just come and make judgments” (我今天就试个妆, 试完妆了, 我知道我怎么画了, 我就录视频。这些傻逼就来逼逼; wo jintian jiu shigezhuang, shiwan zhuang le, wozhidao wo zenme huale, wo jiu lu shipin. Zhexie shabi jiulai bibi). Supporters stood on the side of LS 8, as Figure 3.5 shows. For example, the user called Liu Yiqing’s Big Stick (柳亦清の巨棒, liuyiqing de jubang) commented, saying “fight back, please fight back at him” (怼他, 阿星怼他; duita, axing duita), and another user called Peaceful Soul Flower (安魂花, anhunhua) commented to the trolls, saying “you say it’s ugly, but no one forces you to watch” (说难看没人扒着你眼珠子让你看, shuo nankan meiren bazhe ni yanzhuzi rangnikan). The trolls, however, did not stop. One troll called Blank Brother (空白小哥哥, kongbai xiaogege) commented that “this live streamer is rude” (主播素质真低, zhubo suzhi zhendi). Seventeen comments of LS 8’s supporters appeared in two minutes to support LS 8. As Figure 3.6 shows, the supporter called Green Bottle Black Curtain (绿瓶子黑窗帘, lv pingzi hei chuanglian) commented, saying “calling you an idiot is rude?” (骂人就素质低了? Maren jiu suzhi di le?), and other supporter called Smilingkk (笑嘻嘻 kk, xiaoxixikk) commented, saying “you are not rude, why don’t you do live streaming” (你素质高你直播啊, ni suzhigao ni zhibo a). The supporter called FuYiqing’s (傅亦卿, fuyiqing) commented, saying “will you smile at the person who says you’re rude?” (你被人骂了你还对他笑? ; ni beiren male nihai duita xiao?). This quarrel between two groups lasted for around five minutes. This quarrel stopped until LS 8’s channel administrator appeared to delete the trolls’ comments and ban the trolls to comment further.

Figure 3.5: Supporters’ counterattack on the comments of trolls called 36149 and So I Don’t Like Eating Rice, when LS 8 angrily complained at the web-camera (Accessed: 12 October, 2017).

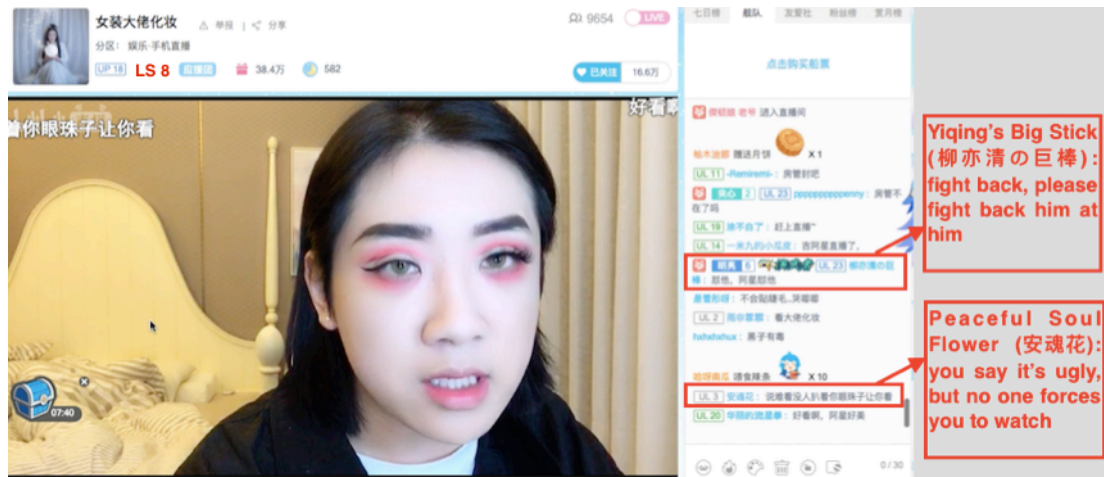


Figure 3.6: Supporters' counterattack on the comment of the troll called Blank Brother (Accessed: 12 October, 2017).



The case of LS 8's live stream on October 12, 2017, tells how trolling and barrage etiquette demarcate the differences between insiders and outsiders in Bilibili live stream channels. The insiders are the viewers who are polite to live streamers and respect live streamers' performances by making friendly comments. These insiders are like the gardeners of live stream channels, who help to deal with the trolls and trolling (Binns, 2012). This is a process of being socialised into the community of a live stream channel. They wall the garden of the channel by keeping barrage etiquette in mind and quickly recognising whether or not a comment is offensive to live streamer and other viewers. Insiders also warn other viewers to mind the barrage etiquette when making comments and avoid to having quarrels between

viewers. For example, at the end of the quarrel between the trolls and LS 8's supporters, one of LS 8's channel administrators named A Strawberry-taste Crystal (草莓味的小透明, caomeiweide xiao touming) banned the trolls and also warned other viewers, saying "Here is the channel administrator. Please mind the barrage etiquette. Any judgments on physical looks are prohibited." (房管来了, 请注意弹幕礼仪, 拒绝评头论足; fangguan laile, qingzhuyi danmu liyi, jujue pingtou lunzu)

Outsiders are more likely to violate barrage etiquette. The outsiders are the viewers who have no fan badges in front of their usernames and usually have a lower user level (用户等级, yonghu dengji). The user level is a sign, as Figure 3.7 shows, displaying the degree of a user engaging in live stream channels (Bilibili, 2015b). If the user wants to reach a higher user level, this user has to stay in one live stream channel for a period. In every five minutes when a user is watching a live stream, this user will receive 3,000 points of experience (经验值, jingyanzhi). This mechanism looks like a game mechanic: the higher level the user is, the more points of experience to upgrade one level are needed. As Table 3.1 shows, the points of experience to upgrade the level are 100,000 between level 1 to level 10, the points are 800,000 between level 11 to level 15, and the points are 1,000,000 between level 16 to level 20. The more time a user spends on watching live streams, the more points of experience the user will attain and the more familiarity with the barrage etiquette of Bilibili community the user will have. This means that users with higher user levels may be less likely to troll compared to the users with a lower user level. They would highly value their effort and time that have spent in attaining a high user level. In LS 8's live stream on October 12, 2017, the viewers who did trolling displayed in Figure 3.3 have lower user levels or even no user levels, such as LixunXiaobaoAeeeeeee who was in level 2 and 3614 who even had no user level. Their violating of barrage etiquette infuriated other viewers who had higher user levels. A viewer named いタ月(いタ月, いタ yue), whose user level is level 13, commented on the trolls, saying "I don't understand why they make people feel angry at them" (不懂上赶着来找骂的人是什么心态, budong shanggan zhe lai zhaomaderen shi shenme xintai), and

the viewer called FuYiqing, who had reached level 13 commented on the trolls, commented, saying “they just want to show the sense of presence” (他们刷存在感, tamen shua cunzaigan). These comments on the possible reasons of trolling confirm the claim of Herring, Job-Sluder, Scheckler and Barab that trolls may gain a sense of self-empowerment and attention from consuming the effort and time of online community members to deal with (Herring, Job-Sluder, Scheckler and Barab, 2002). Once being reported to Bilibili administrators or prohibited by channel administrators to comment further, the trolls may quickly abandon their low-level usernames.

Figure 3.7: Signs of user level displayed in webpage and in mobile phone page that explained in Bilibili’s “The Introduction of User Level Upgrade” (用户等级每周福利今日上线, yonghu dengji meizhou fuli jinri shangxian). Available at: <https://live.bilibili.com/news/detail/52> (Accessed: 23 October, 2015).

WEB		MOBILE
UL 01	(普通的)UL1-10	UL 10
UL 11	(优秀的)UL11-20	UL 20
UL 21	(精良的)UL21-30	UL 30
UL 31	(史诗的)UL31-40	UL 40
UL 41	(神圣的)UL41-50	UL 50
UL 51	(传说的)UL51-60	UL 60

Table 3.1: The table of the points of experience needed to upgrade a user level from level 1 to level 20. See the entire table in Appendix 3.1. Available at: <https://live.bilibili.com/news/detail/52> (Accessed: 23 October, 2015).

User Level Programme (用户等级方案)		
User Level (用户等级)	Total Points of Experience (总经验)	Points of Experience Value needed to Upgrade (升级所需经验)
1	100,000	100,000
2	200,000	100,000

3	300,000	100,000
4	400,000	100,000
5	500,000	100,000
6	600,000	100,000
7	700,000	100,000
8	800,000	100,000
9	900,000	100,000
10	1,000,000	100,000
11	1,800,000	800,000
12	2,600,000	800,000
13	3,400,000	800,000
14	4,200,000	800,000
15	5,000,000	800,000
16	6,000,000	1,000,000
17	7,000,000	1,000,000
18	8,000,000	1,000,000
19	9,000,000	1,000,000
20	10,000,000	1,000,000

The barrage etiquette cannot discipline the behaviour of all viewers. On the one hand, trolling is an individual behaviour that trolls and other viewers may treat trolling differently. For instance, trolls think trolling is proposing a different opinion from other viewers, while other viewers may think trolling as an unfriendly behaviour. On the other hand, most viewers are anonymous. As anonymity enables an individual to hide their offline personal identification, people may take advantage of the anonymity to behave anti-socially or aggressively to other people in the online world (Hogan, 2013). This means that anonymity protects the people who aggressively behave online from taking responsibility for their aggressive comments on other people. Anonymity would bring a challenge to Bilibili. If the site does not take actions to solve this challenge that anonymity brings or does not discipline aggressive users with community rules, other users who do not aggressively behave on the site may leave. On Bilibili, the barrage etiquette does not list in Bilibili's published community guidelines. As a result, in Bilibili live stream channels, the anonymity of usernames provides a shelter for the trolls.

Anonymity would also become a potential obstacle for Bilibili to reach the expectation of creating “a harmonious, healthy and positive live streaming circumstance” (Bilibili, 2015a). This obstacle may result from a lack of restrictions on the viewers’ identification. Bilibili responds to the state’s call of regulating online live streaming sites. The Cyberspace Administration of China requires that “live streaming sites must verify live streamers’ identification, hand on the copies of live streamers’ identification information to local Internet Information Office, and provide these copies when relevant law enforcement departments inquire according to the laws” (see translations in Appendix 3.2; Cyberspace Administration of China, 2016). This is to ensure that live streamers are over eighteen years old and can take legal responsibility for their public performances within the laws of the state. However, the state’s laws and Bilibili’s Agreement do not require the viewers’ copies of identification information. The viewers do not have to provide any identifying information. They stay anonymous in live stream channels. This lack of identification verification facilitates some viewers to troll in live stream channels. The viewers who do not like trolling complained the viewers who do troll as the “primary school students” (小学生, *xiaoxuesheng*). The phrase of “primary school student” does not really mean the trolls are primary school students. It means the trolls do not behave as “sane and polite” (理智和礼貌, *lizhi he limao*) as the viewers who follow barrage etiquette (Bilibili, 2017e).

3.2 Subscribers: Come, Watch, Stay and Subscribe

Subscribers on Bilibili are called Fensi (粉丝, *fensi*) or Putong Fensi (普通粉丝, *putong fensi*). They are the viewers who come to the channel, watch live streamers’ performances and subscribe to the live stream channels. Every subscriber who subscribes to the live stream channel and donates a B Kela (B 珂垃), a gift on Bilibili to show a viewer is interested in the live streamer’s performance, will receive a fan badge (粉丝勋章, *fensi xunzhang*). The fan badge is a sign to display that this viewer is a fan of a live streamer. Figure 3.8 is an example of a fan badge that appears with the comment of a viewer named I Only Know Little Witch (只认得小巫的我, *zhinengde xiaowu de wo*).

This fan badge has two parts. The left side shows the name of LS 7, and the right side shows the level of this fan badge. This fan badge displays the length of time that this subscriber has spent on a particular live stream channel. The longer the time a subscriber stays in a live stream channel, the higher grade of the fan badge the subscriber will attain (Bilibili, 2017f). Every fan badge is exclusive. Once a live streamer uses the phrases to name his or her fan badge, other live streamers cannot use this name again (Bilibili, 2017f). Every viewer can attain a maximum of twenty fan badges and can switch fan badges when changing channels.

Figure 3.8: An example of fan badge. The left side of the fan badge is the name of live streamer LS 7, and the right side of the fan badge shows the level of this fan badge. Available at: <https://live.bilibili.com/549> (Accessed from September 19, 2017).



Subscribers are the experts who actively participate in live stream channels. Bilibili calls them as the “true love fans” (真爱粉, zhenai fen), and the fan badge “only belongs to the true love fans” (真爱粉必备, zhenai fen bibe) (Bilibili, 2017f). What does “true love fan” mean? Bilibili does not make a clear definition of it. However, it is easy to find the meaning of “true love fan” when connecting with the sentence of the fan badge “only belongs to the true love fan”. Behind this sentence, there is a perception. The perception is that the level of fan badge reveals the frequency of participation and communication that a subscriber has involved in a live stream channel. In other words, the fan badge displays a close connection between subscribers and live streamers. The higher grade of fan badge the subscribers attain, the more connection establishes between live streamers and subscribers. Therefore, a “true love fan” can be defined as a subscriber who subscribes to

a live stream and often participates in live stream channels. What kind of frequent participation do subscribers do in live stream channels? This section will introduce subscribers' participation, which made the subscribers stay close to the live streamers. Two main issues disclose the close connection between subscribers and live streamers to make the group of subscribers dominant in viewers. One is that subscribers enjoy privileges in live stream channels, and the other is that subscribers can compete for being the channel administrator. This section will start with an explanation of what kind of privileges that subscribers have in live stream channels and their influences on the communication between subscribers and live streamers. Then this section will study the role of channel administrator plays in the live stream channel and its impacts on the community spirit in live stream channels.

(i) Keeping Close Connection with Live Streamers: Enjoying Privilege

There are two issues showing subscribers have a close connection with live streamers. First is the privilege that live streamers offer to subscribers. The privilege is that live streamers inquiry subscribers about what performance subscribers want to watch. For example, LS 4 allowed one of her subscribers named Soda Powder (苏打粉, sudafen) to choose songs for her to sing in her singing live stream on January 29, 2018. In this example, the fan badge encourages the participation of the subscribers by providing the subscribers with the opportunity to suggest performances for LS 4. Wearing a fan badge becomes important for a subscriber to be noticed by live streamer when a large number of comments flood in a live stream channel (Bilibili, 2017f). For example, as Figure 3.9 shows, on the singing live stream of LS 4 on October 20, 2017, a subscriber named Problem Child (问题儿童 ProblemChild, wenti ertong ProblemChild) wore the level 2 fan badge of LS 4 and asked LS 4, saying "Can you sing Liu Ruiqi's Wukelili?" (乌克兰丽丽—刘瑞琪, 会唱吗? wukelili-liuruiqi, hui chang ma?). LS 4 noticed Problem Child's inquiry and answered with gesturing "OK", saying "Wukelili? Sure. I haven't sung Wukelili for a long time" (乌克兰丽丽吗? 会唱。好久没唱了; wukelili ma? huichang. Haojiu mei chang le).

Figure 3.9: LS 4 gestured “OK” when answering Problem Child’s question that “Can you sing Liu Ruiqi’s Wukelili?” (Accessed from October 20, 2017).



The privilege that live streamers offer to the subscribers would bring pressure to live streamers. This because some subscribers have expectations on live streamers when live streamers cannot always complete. Some subscribers expect a gaming live streamer could always remember all the tricks of the game that a gaming live streamer is playing. As the gaming live streamer LS 12 stated in his gaming live stream on October 18, 2017, if the live streamer wishes to retain subscribers, “the gaming live streamer know how to win the game” (游戏主播肯定得知道怎么去玩这个游戏, youxi zhubo kending de zhidao zenme qu wan zhege youxi). For example, to successfully win the multiplayer online role-playing shooter game *Escape From Tarkov*, LS 12 said that “the basic knowledge about arms is needed” (需要有基本的枪支知识, xuyaoyou jibende qiangzhi zhishi).

Even in the same live stream channel, subscribers may have various expectations, which brings pressure to live streamers. For example, in LS 11’s gaming live stream, two kinds of expectation of subscribers were found. One was that some subscribers wanted to watch LS 11 playing the game that LS 11 was good at. On LS 11’s live stream on May 25, 2017, some subscribers commented, saying “Why don’t you play *Player UnKnown’s Battlegrounds*? I

hope you could play it” (你为什么 not 玩绝地求生大逃杀? 好希望看你玩; ni weishenme buwan jue di qiusheng dataosha? Hao xiwang kan ni wan). *Player UnKnown's Battlegrounds* is an online multiplayer shooting game that LS 11 often plays in his live stream channel. On May 25, 2017, LS 11 played a new game instead of *Player UnKnown's Battlegrounds*. LS 11 explained, saying “I understand some of you want to watch me playing *Player UnKnown's Battlegrounds*. You also want to watch me winning games all the time. But I can't. I make mistakes, get defeated and lose the game. That's the real me... you may find other gaming live streamers always win the game they played in their live stream channels...but not me...I just play what I like” (我知道有些人希望看我玩大逃杀, 你们也总想看我赢。但是我做不到。我也会犯错、失败和输了。这才是我...你们也会看别的主播老赢游戏...但不是我...我就玩我想玩的; wo zhidao youxieren xiwang kanwo wan dataosha, nimen ye zongxiang kan wo ying. danshi wozuobudao. Wo yehui fancuo, shibai he shule. Zhe caishi wo...nimen yehui kan biede zhubo lao ying youxi...dan bushi wo...wo jiu wan wo xiangwan de). The other kind of expectation is that subscribers hope to communicate more with a live streamer. On May 25, 2017, LS 11 replied subscribers' complain, saying “you want me to perform excellently in games and at the same time you want me to answer your questions, it's impossible” (你们希望我赢游戏, 又叫我回答你们一直重复问的问题, 这不可能做到啊; nimen xiwang wo yingyouxi, youjiaowo huida nimen yizhi chongfu wen de wenti, zhe bukeneng zuodao a). LS 11 was reluctant to change along with the subscribers' expectation.

(ii) Keeping Close Connection with Live Streamers: Channel Administrator

The second issue showing subscribers have a close connection with live streamers is that a subscriber with a fan badge is eligible to compete for the place of managing the channel. No mechanics, bots or applications have been found on Bilibili to help live streamers deal with the repetitive works of prohibiting trolling and advertising channels. Many live streamers, in the participant observation, were willing to “hire channel administrators” (招收房管, zhaoshou fangguan) and nominated subscribers to be channel administrators (房管, fangguan). To this extent, the channel administrator in

Bilibili's live stream channels is the same role as the moderator in other live streaming sites' channels, such as Twitch, who "are given the privileges to perform administrative duties within the stream" (Hamilton, Garretson and Kerne, 2014, p. 1316). The subscribers who are nominated by live streamers will receive a channel administrator badge as Figure 3.10 shows. The channel administrator badge is placed in front of the fan badge, which is similar to the "special icon in the chat client to denote their status" in Twitch (Hamilton, Garretson and Kerne, 2014, p. 1316).

Figure 3.10: The badge of channel administrator is placed in front of the fan badge. Available at: <https://live.bilibili.com/359> (Accessed from October 18, 2017).



Some channel administrators actively advertise live streamers in the comment section in live stream channels. A representative channel administrator is SUYI's Favorite Dog (奶爹最爱的狗, *naidie zuiaide gou*). SUYI's Favorite Dog was one of LS 4's channel administrators and was frequently active when LS 4 was hosting live streams. As Figure 3.11 shows, on October 18, 2017, SUYI's Favourite Dog wore the channel administrator badge and advertised LS 4 with the comments, saying "welcome to the channel of LS 4" (欢迎来到奶国, *huanying laidao naiguo*), "if you like LS 4's singing, please follow her" (喜欢听奶苏唱歌的小伙伴点个关注吧, *xihuan ting naisu change de xiaohuoban diange guanzhu ba*) and "once subscribe, you will always have LS 4's company" (一朝入教终生有奶, *yizhao rujiao zhongsheng younai*). These advertisements circulated in the streaming section and comment section during LS 4's live streaming on October 18, 2017. These advertisements of SUYI's Favourite Dog helped LS 4 get rid of the number of burdensome tasks in managing comments and advertising LS 4.

Figure 3.11: SUYI's Favourite Dog wore the channel administer badge and advertised LS 4 on October 18, 2017 with “if you like LS 4’s singing, please follow her” and “once you join in, you will always have LS 4’s company” in the comment section. This advertisement appeared in the streaming section and comment section as two rectangles show (Accessed: 18 October, 2017).



For new live streamers, the channel administrators help to create a sense of helping live streamer “become better” (成长, chengzhang). Here the sense of helping live streamer “become better” means that, under the help of subscribers, a new live streamer who does not know how to host live streams gradually becomes expert live streamer who knows well of doing live streams. It is significant for new live streamers. A new live streamer usually starts doing live streams with few subscribers. If the channel administrator of a new live streamer can advertise this live streamer, which brings attention, this new live streamer will be known by more viewers in a short period. For example, LS 1 was a new ASMR live streamer who started live streaming in early September 2017 but had around 10,000 new subscribers in two months, from September 18 to November 3. This increase in new subscriptions was attributed to the advertisement of LS 1’s channel administrators. LS 1 said that she was shy in the live stream channel and usually less communicated with viewers. Two channel administrators advertised it, Mushroom White (蘑菇淼白, mogu mobai) and Mushroom Rabbit (蘑菇淼兔, mogu motu). As Figure 3.12 shows, on

September 21, 2017, Mushroom Rabbit described LS 1, saying “her ASMR live stream lacks conversation but she will occasionally answer questions and always appreciate your virtual gifts” (少人声 ASMR, 蘑菇酱偶尔会回答问题和感谢礼物的; shao rensheng ASMR, moguijiang ouer hui huida wenti he ganxie liwude). Mushroom White also encouraged viewers to subscribe to LS 1’s channel, saying “please remember to subscribe, and LS 1 will help you fall asleep with ASMR every day” (宝宝们记得关注, 蘑菇每天都会哄你睡觉哦; baobaomen jide guanzhu, mogu meitian douhui hong ni shuijiao o). With the advertisement of Mushroom White and Mushroom Rabbit, the number of LS 1’s subscribers reached around 23,000 on November 3, 2017.

Figure 3.12: Mushroom White and Mushroom Rabbit, two channel administrators of LS 1, advertised LS 1 in the comment section of LS 1’s ASMR live stream channel on September 21, 2017 (Accessed: 21 September, 2017).



After discussing subscribers’ close connection with live streamers, it is easy to find that the subscribers are the dominant group of viewers. This group can enjoy the privilege of making suggestions for live streamers in their performances, and they have different expectations on live streamers’ performances. This dominant group can also compete for the channel administrators of managing channels and advertising for the live streamers. However, beyond this dominant group, there is a group of viewers who would like to buy the Big Voyage (大航海, da hanghai) membership. They constitute

a more loyal minority and create income for live streamers, which will be discussed in the following section.

3.3 On-board Subscribers in Big Voyage: Come, Watch, Subscribe, and Contribute

Big Voyage (大航海, da hanghai) is a gift system (道具系统, daoju xitong) launched on October 19, 2016. Viewers can “buy the ticket to board the voyage of live streamer” (购买船票上船, gougai chuanpiao shangchuan) and become the members of “the voyage who supports and guards live streamer (舰队可是支持主播的首席亲卫队, jiandui keshi zhichi zhubo de shouxi qinweidui) (Bilibili, 2016b; Bilibili, 2018h). It is a new system designed by Bilibili to “improve the income of live streamers and let live streamers provide higher quality content” (帮助主播获取收益, 能够更好为用户提供优质内容; bangzhu zhubo huoqu shouyi, nenggou genghao wei yonghu tigong youzhi neirong) (Bilibili, 2016c). The viewer who buys Big Voyage tickets are the on-board subscribers (船员, chuanyuan). There are three kinds of tickets in Big Voyage: the captain (舰长, jiangzhang) ticket, the prefect (提督, tidu) ticket and the satrap (总督, zongdu) ticket (Bilibili, 2018h).

The tickets of Big Voyage are different from the common virtual gifts in Table 2.1 of Chapter Two, which had existed before the launch of Big Voyage. Most tickets of Big Voyage are expensive than common virtual gifts. The common virtual gifts only stay when the live stream is on, while the membership of Big Voyage usually lasts for one month. The viewers who buy the membership of Big Voyage can renew it to retain the membership for a longer time. These two differences will be explained with a comparison between the content of Table 2.1 and Table 3.2. Table 2.1 in Chapter Two will be referred to when displaying the differences between common virtual gifts and Big Voyage tickets. Table 2.1 lists the details of common virtual gifts, and Table 3.3.1 lists the details of Big Voyage's three tickets. In these two tables, every 1,000 gold melon seeds (金瓜子, jinguazi) cost CNY 1, and silver melon seeds (银瓜子, yinguazi) do not cost money. The viewers can receive 30

silver melon seeds every three minutes during viewers watching live streams. From Table 2.1 and Table 3.2, it is easy to find that the price of Big Voyage tickets is much higher than that of most common virtual gifts. Big Voyage tickets last a longer time than common virtual gifts. Common virtual gifts only display for a while in the live stream channels, but the Big Voyage tickets stay in the live stream channels for one month and even longer if renewed by the viewers who pay for it. As Figure 3.13 shows, when a viewer buys one of the Big Voyage tickets, his or her name will show up and hang at the top of the comment section, which seems like a return for the viewers who buy the tickets of Big Voyage.

Table 3.2: Details of three Big Voyage tickets. Available at: <https://link.bilibili.com/p/help/index#/great-navigation> (Accessed: 14 December, 2018)




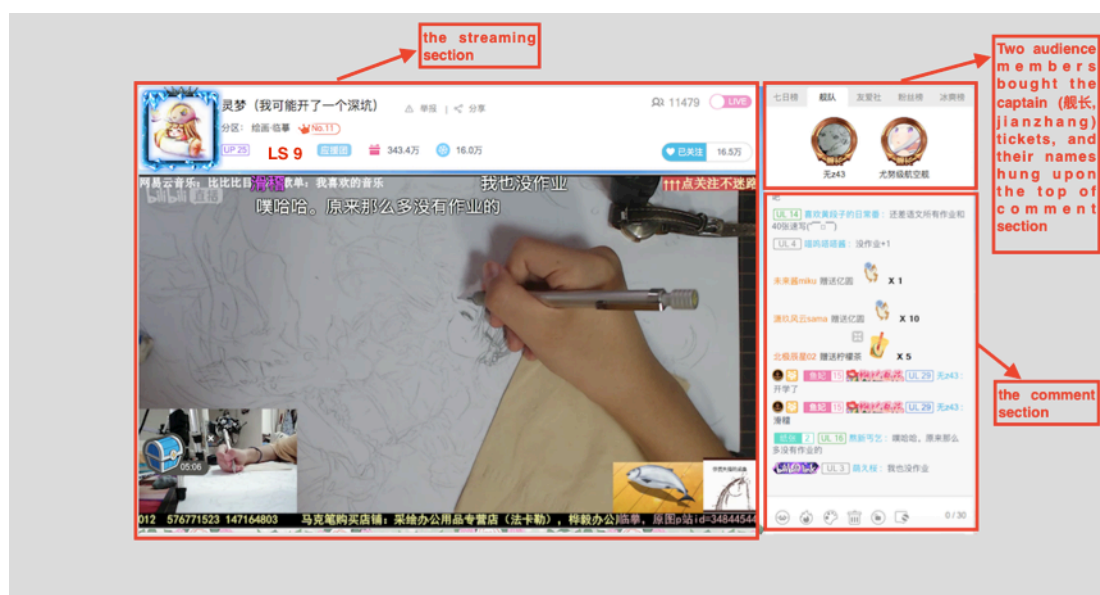
Image	Name	Cost	Function
 舰长	Captain (舰长, jianzhang), the bottom class of Big Voyage tickets	198 RMB for the first month, and 158 RMB for the following month if the viewer wants to renew.	Enjoy 20% off on common gifts (except little television), and enjoy 1.5 times of receiving points of experience to the level of fan badge
 提督	Prefect (提督, tidu), the middle class of Big Voyage tickets	1,998 RMB for the first month, and 1,598 RMB for the following month if the viewer wants to renew.	Enjoy 20% off on common gifts (including little television), and enjoy 2 times of receiving points of experience to the level of fan badge
 总督	Satrap (总督, zongdu), the top class of Big Voyage tickets	19,998 RMB for the first month, and 15,998 RMB for the following month if the viewer wants to renew.	Enjoy 20% off on common gifts and 47% off on little television, and enjoy 3 times of receiving points of experience to the level of fan badge

Figure 3.13: Two viewers bought the captain tickets and their usernames were put at the top of the comment section in LS 9's live stream channel on August 23, 2017 (Accessed: 23 August, 2017).



This section will illustrate how Big Voyage influences the communication between live streamers and viewers and the construction of community spirit in live stream channels. This thesis finds that the Big Voyage influences live stream channels in the way of pulling on-board subscribers closer to the live streamers and pushing other viewers away from live streamers. The Big Voyage is potentially creating a hierarchy between viewers. In this hierarchy, on-board subscribers are at the top, other subscribers in the middle and passers-by at the bottom. The Big Voyage also influences the connection between live streamers and viewers. A close connection is the creation of dense interaction and mutual influence (Arthur Aron and Debra Mashek, 2004). In live stream channels on Bilibili, the mutual influence brings dense interaction and creates a close connection. This process starts with encouraging viewers to pay for Big Voyage tickets, which creates economic income to live streamers. Then, as a return, the usernames of on-board subscribers will hang at the top of the comment section. It reminds live streamers that on-board subscribers are the special group of viewers that live streamers would pay more attention to. The close connection between on-board subscribers and live streamers finally forms. For example,

in the live stream on September 22, 2017, LS 4 sang songs for It's Your Letter (是你的字母啊, shi nide zimu a), who bought the prefect ticket of LS 4 channel, as birthday gift. LS 4 also called other viewers to bless It's Your Letter before LS 4 started singing, saying "today is It's Your Letter's birthday, let us say happy birthday to It's Your Letter" (今天是我们字母的生日, 大家快发生日快乐; jintian shi women zimude shengri, dajia kuai fa shengri kuaile). Other viewers followed this, including passers-by, subscribers and channel administrators, as Figure 3.14 shows. In Figure 3.14, passers-by like Rolling Organics0v0 (滚来滚去的有机物 0v0, gunlaigunqu de youjiwu 0v0), Living In FearOvO (生畏 OvO, sheng weiOvO) and Flower Falls (花落, hua luo) commented, saying "Happy Birthday" (生日快乐, shengri kuaile). Subscribers named as Dull Milk (懵奶, mengnai), Second Judge (二号评委, erhao pingwei), Salted Winter Dumpling (咸了吧唧的冬日饺子, xianlebaji de dongri jiaozi), Riding House Wishes 359 SUYI Drinks Milk A Rising Popularity (骑马祝 359 奶爹人气飙升, qima zhu 359 naidie renqi biao sheng) and the channel administrator Having Squid (有鱿鱼咩, you youyu mie), who displaying LS 4's fan badge in front of their usernames also commented, saying "Happy Birthday to It's Your Letter" (字母生日快乐, zimu shengri kuaile).

Figure 3.14: The comments of "Happy Birthday" (生日快乐, shengri kuaile) and "Happy Birthday to It's Your Letter" (字母生日快乐, zimu shengri kuaile) made by passers-by, subscribers, and channel administrators in LS 4's live stream on September 22, 2017 (Accessed: 22 September, 2017).



As a result of the Big Voyage pulling on-board subscribers closer to live streamers, it could push other viewers away from live streamers. In participant observation, live streamers usually suggest on-board subscribers join their exclusive QQ groups, which are of on-board subscribers. Live streamers chat with on-board subscribers on the topics that are not included in the live streams. The viewers who are not on-board subscribers would feel confused when live streamers and on-board subscribers continue to discuss the topic. In that situation, viewers who are not on-board subscribers stand outside the conversation. For instance, on October 20, 2017, on-board subscribers of LS 4 were in the discussion on the differences between different levels of fan badge, such as the different colours of fan badge in different levels, which as LS 4 said has been discussed in her QQ group that constituted of on-board subscribers. In this live stream, other viewers asked questions about what on-board subscribers were talking several times, but the discussion between on-board subscribers soon covered these questions.

The hierarchy between viewers is a result of Bilibili's intervention in creating a top class of viewers who pay for the Big Voyage tickets. When on-board subscribers buy the expensive Big Voyage tickets, their payment will accordingly be a large portion of live streamers' income. Therefore, live

streamers are highly possible to give more attention to communicate with on-board subscribers than to other viewers. This hierarchy, however, is fragile. Two reasons account for it. One is that the on-board subscribers do not buy the Big Voyage ticket exclusively in one live stream channel. They have multiple choices of selecting live stream channels when they decide to buy the Big Voyage tickets. This shakes the hierarchy when on-board subscribers decide to stop the membership. When on-board subscribers leave the voyages of live streamers, no one stands at the prominent place in live stream channels as well as on the top of the hierarchy. The hierarchy, therefore, becomes fragile.

The other reason that accounts for the fragile hierarchy is that live streamers would abandon channels or leave the platform, which will suddenly cut off the connection between live streamers and viewers. As far as this thesis has found, live streamers abandoned channels or leave Bilibili either for the reason of they moving to another live streaming site with a guarantee of higher income or for the reason of they just quitting live streaming (Bilibili, 2017g). For example, YuTian ZhenGong (玉田真宮), who used to host live streams at night daily, closed her channel in January of 2017, for the reason of “I don’t know what to live stream” (不知道直播什么, buzhidao zhibo shenme). Another gaming live streamer called Nai sama (奈さま, nai sama) made a post to her subscribers on October 5, 2017, and she asked her viewers not to blame her if she abandoned channel on Bilibili one day in the future (NaiSama, 2017). Because live streamers usually do not mention their activities on other sites, it is hard to know whether the live streamers who leave Bilibili or abandon channels on Bilibili would continue hosting live streams on other sites. Once live streamers leave the site or abandon channels, the connection that has set up between live streamers and viewers will be cut off, and the hierarchy between viewers will disappear. To this extent, the fragile hierarchy does not help to construct a solid community spirit in live stream channels.

3.4 Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter introduced and analysed different participation of three groups of viewers. Currently, viewers rather than live streamers are occupying the majority of users in live stream channels. This suggests that the participation of viewers, especially subscribers and on-board subscribers, can help draw the images of Bilibili users. A Bilibili user would be a self-disciplined and polite user who respects the performances of live streamers. This typical image of a Bilibili user was found in the unwritten barrage etiquette, and now it becomes a standard that Bilibili suggests newcomers learn. Newcomers are welcomed in live streams channels but not those who make rude and unfriendly comments. The barrage etiquette is the boundary that classifies newcomers and experts because experts usually avoid trolling and making rude comments in live stream channels.

Both barrage etiquette and Big Voyage gift system are separating viewers into different groups, which answers the question proposed at the beginning of Chapter Three of how insiders and outsiders are defined. Barrage etiquette separates insiders and outsiders, and insiders can identify outsiders when outsiders made trolling. As a result, barrage etiquette attracts more insiders who strictly follow barrage etiquette, to the opposite side to the outsiders, who are not familiar with barrage etiquette. At the same time, Big Voyage also provides priorities to on-board subscribers of having closeness and familiarity with live streamers. Live streamers pay more attention to on-board subscribers and would focus less on the comments of other subscribers and passers-by. This drives away some subscribers and passers-by who think they are not noticed by live streamers and are not important in live stream channels.

Chapter Two and Chapter Three examined the online participation of Bilibili users. They examined Bilibili users' practices in ACG interests and beyond the ACG, and also displayed the process of Bilibili users in constructing community spirit in live stream channels. These practices are important but not enough to understand the Bilibili online community. A close

offline observation on Bilibili users in Bilibili offline activity is needed. Bilibili World is one of the offline activities displaying the Bilibili online community culture, which cannot be neglected in understanding the Bilibili online community. Observing users' practices in Bilibili World will help to understand the Bilibili online community better. Thus, the next chapter will introduce my experience of attending Bilibili World 2017 and explain the findings of Bilibili users and Bilibili online community culture.

Chapter Four: The Offline Cluster of Bilibili Users—Bilibili World 2017

Bilibili World is an offline exhibition organised annually by Bilibili to display Bilibili online community culture. Only registered users (注册会员, zhucei huiyuan) and official users (正式会员, zhengshi huiyuan) can buy tickets, which ensures all attendees recognise Bilibili community culture. Bilibili World displays the things that Bilibili owners think relate to its online culture. On the other hand, Bilibili World is a place for users to display their interests and hobbies to their peers who have the same interests and hobbies. Attending Bilibili World is an excellent opportunity to observe this community culture and Bilibili users in the real world rather than in online live streams. With this purpose, I attended Bilibili World at Shanghai ICBC World EXPO Exhibition and Convention Centre (上海工银中心上海世博展览馆, shanghai gongyin zhongxin shanghai shibo zhanlanguan) on July 22, 2017.

This chapter will analyse the findings of Bilibili online community culture and the participation of Bilibili users collected from Bilibili World. What did Bilibili users do at Bilibili World? What was the connection between Bilibili World and the Bilibili online community? How did live streaming function at Bilibili World? Did the community spirit in online live stream channels exist in Bilibili World? If so, and what was the similarity or difference? This chapter will start with a description of the layout of Bilibili World, and then it will illustrate the findings of Bilibili online community culture and Bilibili users that collected from Bilibili World. It was found that Bilibili World was a promotional activity for Bilibili online community culture and other business brands. The attendees of Bilibili World practised consumption on entertainment content. This kind of consumption was community-oriented, and Bilibili viewed the attendees of Bilibili World as the driving force. This community-oriented consumption on entertainment content, however, might create a collision with the individual-oriented attendance of attendees. It was also found that many attendees were not shy to express their passion for wearing anime costumes and cosplaying anime characters. These findings will be explained in this chapter after an introduction of the layout of Bilibili World.

4.1 The Layout of Bilibili World 2017

Before illustrating the findings, a brief introduction of the layout of Bilibili World will make. Bilibili World 2017 had two main areas at Shanghai ICBC World EXPO Exhibition and Convention Centre. One is the promotion area (宣传和手办展示区, xuanchuan he shouban zhanshiqu), and the other is the activity area (活动区, huodongqu). Outside the activity area is the promotion area, as Figure 4.1 shows. In Figure 4.1, there was one of Bilibili's representative anime figures, the Little Television, which was in blue and white colours. In front of Little Television were two Bilibili girls, 22 Girl and 33 Girl, who were cosplayed by two staff. Behind Little Television was the handmade model¹⁶ (手办, shouban) wall, which exhibited the handmade models of 22 Girl and 33 Girl as Figure 4.2 shows.

Figure 4.1: Bilibili's Little Television and 22 Girl and 33 Girl who were cosplayed by Bilibili's staff in the promotion area, taken on July 22, 2017.



Figure 4.2: Attendees sat in front of the handmade model wall in Bilibili's promotion area, taken on July 22, 2017.

¹⁶ Handmade model is a product printed or made with the images of anime characters from anime, comics and games (ACG). It can be a model made with the visual image of an anime figure from ACG, or it can be the photo album that prints anime images. The handmade models are classified into amateur ones and commercial one. ACG fans usually created the amateur handmade models for private use or exchange, and the commercial ones are usually displayed or sold at ACG exhibitions.

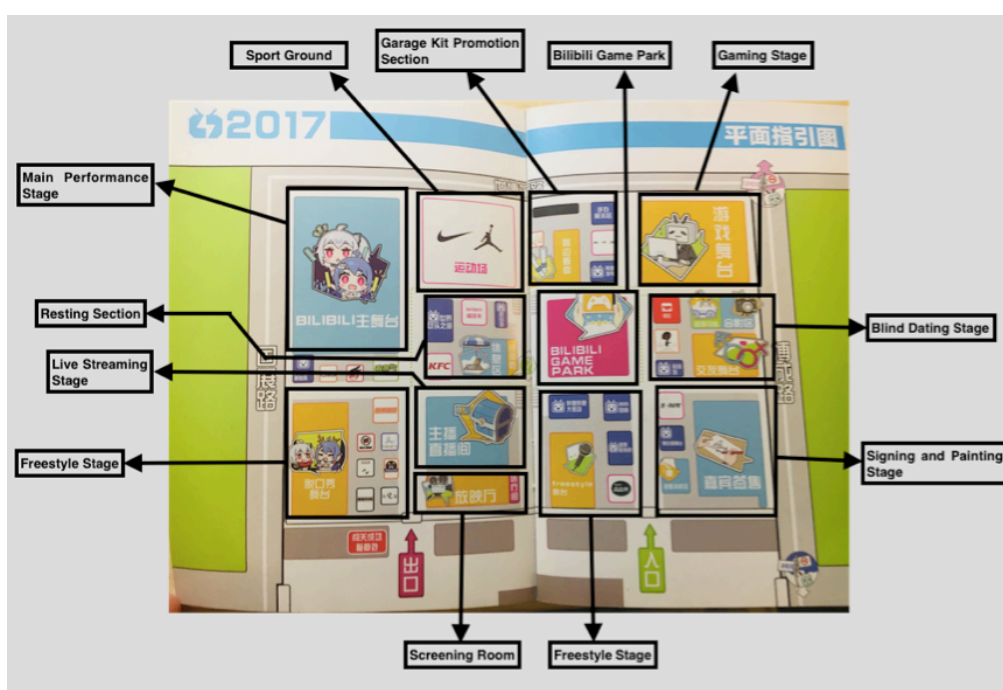


The activity area has ten stages. They are the Main Performance Stage (主舞台, zhuwutai), the Talk Show Stage (脱口秀舞台, tuokouxiu wutai), the Live Streaming Stage (主播直播间, zhubo zhibojian), the Screening Room (放映厅, fangyingting), the Sports Ground (运动场, yundongchang), the Bilibili Game Park, the Freestyle Stage (freestyle 舞台, freestyle wutai), the Gaming Stage (游戏舞台, youxi wutai), the Blind Dating Stage (交友舞台, jiaoyou wutai), and the Signing and Painting Stage (签绘区, qianhuiqu). These ten stages constitute the panorama of the activity area, as Figure 4.3 and 4.4 displays. Figure 4.3 is the photo taken at the entrance of the activity area at Bilibili World. Figure 4.4 is the map of the activity area that showed on the Bilibili World Passport (Bilibili World 集章护照, Bilibili World jizhang huzhao), which is a pamphlet showing the map of activity area and the timetables of performances. Having introduced the panorama of Bilibili World's activity area, the following paragraphs will introduce the diverse activities on different stages with the photos I took at Bilibili World.

Figure 4.3: The panorama of Bilibili World's activity area, taken on July 22, 2017.



Figure 4.4: The map of the activity area, printed on the Bilibili World 2017 Passport, taken on July 22, 2017.



Bilibili World exhibited for three days, from July 21 to 23, 2017, and it invited video makers, live streamers and Japanese singers to perform. The video makers who make and upload videos of ACG dancing and singing on Bilibili could be found at the Main Performance Stage, the Signing and Painting Stage¹⁷, the Talk Show Stage, the Live Streaming Stage, the 22 Girl and 33 Girl Kitchen (2233 娘厨房, 2233 niang chufang), and Ivory and Ebony Keys Stage (黑白键舞台, heibaijian wutai) (Bilibili World 2017, 2017). Some invited live streamers hosted live streams on the Live Streaming Stage, and

¹⁷ The Signing and Painting Stage was the place at Bilibili World that the guests signed for their fans, and attendees could draw paintings.

the others hosted live streams online. These online live streams were projected in the Live Streaming Stage. One of the selected live streamers of this thesis, LS 10, was invited to host live stream at Bilibili World, and her live stream was projected on July 22, 2017. Japanese singers, such as Mika Kobayashi, and singing group the Lovelive female group¹⁸ were also invited to perform on the Main Performance Stage.

In the activity area, attendees gathered around different stages and watched performances and live streams. Figure 4.5 shows some attendees were watching a musician playing the drums at the Talk Show Stage, and this musician's performance was projected on the screen behind. Figure 4.6 shows the attendees sat row by row watching a live concert performed by a group of Bilibili users, which was streamed on the screen. In Figure 4.7, two live streamers were cooking at the 22 Girl and 33 Girl Kitchen. Attendees could also perform on the Freestyle Stage and the Talk Show Stage, and they could join the games hosted by Bilibili staff at Bilibili Game Park. An attendee was dancing at the Freestyle Stage, as Figure 4.8 shows. In Figure 4.9, an attendee sang songs on Talk Show Stage, and other attendees sat on the ground watching the performance. In Figure 4.10, some attendees joined the game hosted by a Bilibili staff at the Bilibili Game Park. In this game, the attendees were asked by the host to pick out the targeted ball from the pool of balls, and the attendee who was the first person to find the targeted ball would have a handmade model from Bilibili staff. Figure 4.11 shows a blind date on the Blind Dating Stage. In this blind date, the host selected one male attendee and one female attendee. Two male Bilibili staff wore anime headgears of Little Television and stood on the Blind Dating Stage, and they represent the two attendees who stood under the stage. The images of the two attendees were projected at the right side and left side on the Blind Dating Stage. The

¹⁸ Lovelive, whose full name is *Lovelive! School Idol Project*, is a Japanese multimedia project produced by ASCII Media Works, Dengeki G's Magazine, Lantis, and Sunrise (KLabGames and bushiroad, 2013). This project started with an animation about nine high school girls becoming singing idols to prevent their high school from the shutdown. This project then also involved producing music videos, manga, video games, and a female group called Lovelive female group related to this animation. Bilibili invited this group to attend Bilibili World and also placed a section of Lovelive anime handmade models in the activity area.

host asked questions about two attendees' interests and hobbies and asked whether they were satisfied with this blind date.

Figure 4.5: A musician was playing drums on the Talk Show Stage, taken on July 22, 2017.



Figure 4.6: A small concert performed by a group of Bilibili's users was being streamed on the screen on the Live Streaming Stage, taken on July 22, 2017.



Figure 4.7: Two live streamers were cooking at the 22 Girl and 33 Girl Kitchen, taken on July 22, 2017.



Figure 4.8: An attendee was dancing at the Freestyle Stage, taken on July 22, 2017.



Figure 4.9: An attendee was singing in front of the screen on the Talk Show Stage while other attendees were sitting row by row under the stage and watching his performance, taken on July 22, 2017.



Figure 4.10: Some attendees were searching for the targeted ball in the pool of balls under the female host's instruction. The female host was sitting at the bottom right corner in this figure, taken on July 22, 2017.



Figure 4.11: A blind date was organised on the Blind Dating Stage, taken on July 22, 2017.



4.2 Four Findings from Bilibili World 2017

Having introduced the layout of Bilibili World 2017 and explained the diverse activities on different stages in the activity area of Bilibili World 2017, this section will discuss the findings of Bilibili online community and Bilibili users. These findings will help better understand Bilibili World, Bilibili users, and the connection between the online community and offline activity. A discussion of these findings will make at the end of this chapter.

(i) Finding One: Bilibili World 2017 was a Promotional activity

The first finding is that Bilibili World was a promotional activity not only for Bilibili but also for other business partners, including sports, fast food, cosmetics, games, drinks and hotel. This finding is opposed to the statement printed on the Bilibili World 2017 Passport that Bilibili World “is a large-scale comprehensive exhibition that provides users with networking opportunities” (提供用户交流机会的大型综合展会类活动, *tigong yonghu jiaoliu jihui de daxing zonghe zhanhuilei huodong*). On the Bilibili World 2017 Passport, which showed the map of activity area and timetables of performances that every attendee could collect at the entrance, Bilibili World was introduced as “an exhibition to display Bilibili online community culture and to provide users more opportunity to communicate with each other” (Bilibili World 是 Bilibili 举办的以 Bilibili 网站为主题, 展现整体网站社区文化, 为用户提供更多线下展示及交流机会; Bilibili World shi bilibili jubande yi bilibili wangzhan weizhuti, zhanxian zhengti wangzhan shequwenhua, wei yonghu tigong gengduo xianxia zhanshi ji jiaoliu jihui). However, the fact was that there were many settings of sponsors’ brands. It showed that Bilibili World was a brand promotion for Bilibili and business partners rather than a communicating activity for community members. Two facts can support this claim. One fact is that Bilibili displayed its diverse online content, which was introduced in Chapter One as anime, games, fashion, drawing, auto-tune remix, dance, music, documentary, history, costume playing and live streams. Some of these content were found in the activity area at Bilibili World. For example, most stages in the activity area had the screens streaming the performances on the stages, as Figure 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, and 4.9 have displayed. The live stream is one of the content that Bilibili promoted online. Its existence on many stages at Bilibili World means Bilibili tried to promote its live streaming service to the attendees by creating an impression that live stream is an important content on Bilibili. The live streaming at Bilibili World also connected the offline Bilibili World with online Bilibili users, which accessed other Bilibili users who did not attend Bilibili World 2017 to watch this offline activity online. The anime content was also widely found at Bilibili World 2017. The costumed staff showed that anime and cosplaying were important elements of the Bilibili

online community. Costumed staff wore anime characters' costumes with the sign of "staff" on the back and stood at the areas and stages, such as 22 Girl and 33 Girl costumed by staff at the promotion area. Figure 4.12 shows a male attendee taking a photo of a female costumed staff who wore the anime costume of 22 Girl at the promotion area. These settings displayed and promoted Bilibili diverse online content.

Figure 4.12: An attendee was taking photo of a costumed staff wearing the costumes of 22 Girl, taken on July 22, 2017.



The other fact to support the claim that Bilibili World 2017 was a promotional activity is that Bilibili promoted their business partners. Some of these brands are spread worldwide, such as the sports brand Nike, the fast-food brand KFC, and the cosmetic brand Maybelline. Nike will be referred to as an example. Nike was one of the sponsors funding Bilibili World 2017 (Bilibili World 2017, 2017). In the activity area, the advertisement of Nike's latest basketball shoes decorated the Sports Ground, as Figure 4.13 shows. Attendees could wear Nike's latest basketball shoes and play basketball on the basketball playground on their own. This game targeted the attendees who were interested in playing basketball, or who might be interested in trying Nike's latest basketball shoes. Sports, including basketball playing, were not one of the main content that promoted on Bilibili online site. It seems that

Bilibili tried to use the brands like Nike to broaden the platform's user base, which made Bilibili more commercially attractive. It seems that Bilibili forgot the initial intention of providing users “more opportunity to communicate with each other” (Bilibili World, 2017).

Figure 4.13: Nike's advertisement and basketball playground in the Sports ground, taken on July 22, 2017.



It is easy to understand that Bilibili World 2017 was a promotional activity rather than an exhibition for users to communicate with each other. As introduced in Chapter One, Bilibili now is a commercial company pursuing economic revenue, and Bilibili World was organised undoubtedly for attaining economic revenue. Eight commercial brands sponsored Bilibili World 2017. In addition to Nike, KFC, and Maybelline, the sponsors also included League of Legends¹⁹ (英雄联盟, yingxiong lianmeng), Tongyi Assam Milk Tea²⁰ (统一阿萨姆奶茶, tongyi asamu naicha), Kotex²¹, Japan Airlines²², and InterContinental Shanghai Expo²³ (上海世博洲际酒店, shanghai shibo zhouji jjudian) (Bilibili World 2017, 2017). Only League of Legends is a game, which relates to one of the main content, gaming, that Bilibili provides, and the other seven business partners are not relevant to the main content that Bilibili

¹⁹ The League of Legends is an online multiplayer battle arena video game.

²⁰ Tongyi Assam Milk Tea is a Taiwanese food enterprise.

²¹ Kotex is a worldwide brand of feminine hygiene products.

²² Japan Airlines is one of the Japanese carrier airlines.

²³ The InterContinental Shanghai Expo is a Chinese hotel located in Shanghai.

promotes online. To this extent, Bilibili World 2017 was more like a general comic convention that usually has different kinds of sponsors and put different activities together, such as the San Diego International Comic Convention. The San Diego International Comic Convention combines exhibits, museums and other public presentations of comic books, games, anime, films, television programmes and other popular art works and attracts the interests of related industries, companies and retailers (San Diego Comic Convention, 2019). This is slightly different from the offline activity organised by a single online platform that is usually sponsored or run by theme-related companies. For example, from June 2, 2018 to July 21, 2018, the California based video game developer and publisher Blizzard Entertainment held an offline convention at ten cities in China and invited players of the multiplayer online role-playing game World of Warcraft to come and play the game with using Dell Alienware gaming laptops and devices provided by the computer technology company Dell (Blizzard, 2018).

It is easy to find that Bilibili World 2017 was a general activity run by a single platform but satisfied different needs of Bilibili, attendees and sponsors at one time in one activity. This can be explained with the example of Bilibili's endeavour of connecting the elements of anime and cosplaying with the product of one sponsor—the international feminine hygiene brand Kotex. There was a small area for promoting Kotex's products at Bilibili World 2017, as Figure 4.14 shows. In this area, two female staff wore red flower print dresses, held microphones, and called attendees who gathered around to join ACG dancing. The attendees who could dance all through the ACG music would have Kotex's latest products. This promotion for Kotex's products showed the business collaboration between Bilibili and Kotex, which combines Bilibili's anime and cosplay elements. In this combination, attendees presented their ACG interests, sponsors promoted their products, and Bilibili harvested its users' loyalty and commercial attraction.

Figure 4.14: Two female staff wore red flower print dresses and called attendees who gathered at Kotex's advertising area to join the ACG dancing.

Behind these two staff were two male attendees who joined the ACG dancing, taken on July 22, 2017.



(ii) Finding Two: A Lack of Communication Between Attendees

Another important issue was that Bilibili World 2017 failed to provide attendees with the opportunity to communicate with each other. This might lead to the lack of community spirit in constructing the Bilibili community through offline activity. Community spirit is an important issue that strengthens the bond between community members, and it forms on the sufficient communication between community members. Any lack of communication would fail to build up community spirit. At Bilibili World 2017, some attendees were found attending this exhibition alone while some attendees were with friends. The common issue was that they have less communication with other attendees. An attendee commented in the queue of buying Lovelive anime handmade models, saying “I think (attending this activity) is the personal behaviour. I get what I want, that’s enough. There is no need to talk with others. I like attending such activity alone or with friends” (我想这是个人行为吧, 我就买些我要的, 就够了, 没必要和其他人交流吧, 我喜欢自己一个人参加或是和朋友一起; woxiang zheshi geren xingweiba, wojiu maixie wo yaode, jiugoule, meibiyao he qitaren jiaoliuba, wo xihuan ziji yigeren canjia huoshihe pengyou yiqi). One reason accounting for the lack of communication between attendees at Bilibili World 2017 is that Bilibili World was a big exhibition

attended by Bilibili users with different interests. These attendees wander around different stages. It was hard to know what precisely these attendees were interested in. As a result, the bond between attendees was not as strong as the one established in live stream channels, which formed in the shared meaning of the combined image and the counterattack against trolls as Chapter Two and Chapter Three have explained.

Although there was a lack of communication and a weak bond between attendees, an enthusiasm of attendees supporting Lovelive female group was found. When Lovelive female group performed on the Main Performance Stage, the attendees who were watching the performance screamed and answered the questions that asked by Lovelive female group members, as Figure 4.15 shows. Figure 4.15 shows the moment that the attendees responded with “yes” (好, hao) when a member of Lovelive female idol group asked the question of whether these attendees would watch their performance at next time.

Figure 4.15: The attendees screamed for the performance of Lovelive female group and answered the question asked by the female group members, taken on July 22, 2017.



However, this enthusiasm of attendees in supporting Lovelive female group at Bilibili World 2017 is only a way of fans expressing support to their favourite group members. It could not become the community spirit precisely as the one shown in Bilibili live stream channels. This is because the community spirit in live stream channels is strengthened and becomes strong in every conversation between live streamers and viewers when live streams are hosted. Viewers of Bilibili online live stream channels, especially the subscribers as Chapter Three observed, also help live streamers manage channels, which means they pay more attention to construct the small communities of live stream channels. However, the attendees' enthusiasm for supporting Lovelive female group at Bilibili World 2017 is only an occasional collective emotional expression of attendees. It only happened once and was not strong enough to become a long-last community spirit. When Bilibili World 2017 ended, this enthusiasm of attendees would vanish.

(iii) Finding Three: Practicing Consumption on Entertaining Products

The third finding is about Bilibili users' practising consumption on entertaining products. Here, practising consumption on entertaining products means Bilibili users are willing to pay for entertaining products that arouse their high interest, such as handmade models. As mentioned in Chapter One, most of Bilibili users were born between 1990 and 2009, and they are the driving force in paying for entertaining content and products in Bilibili's business model (Bilibili, 2018e). They become the targeted customers of Bilibili and other commercial brands at Bilibili World 2017. As section 4.2 pointed out, there were many promotional settings not only for Bilibili online community culture but also for other commercial brands, and the attendees of Bilibili World 2017 were targeted as the possible consumers. The extent that commercial brands benefited from attendees' practice of consuming entertaining products at Bilibili World 2017 is hard to know because there is no relevant financial report released during and after Bilibili World 2017. Bilibili led the attendees to practice consumption on handmade models at Bilibili World 2017. This claim was supported by the popularity of Lovelive handmade models among attendees. Lovelive handmade models were the only anime handmade models placed in the activity area except for the handmade models of Bilibili

representative anime images. They were placed next to the Main Performance Stage. Some of the attendees who watched the performance of Lovelive female group would buy Lovelive handmade models. As shown in Figure 4.16 and Figure 4.17, the queue to buy the Lovelive handmade model was long, behind which was the setting displaying Lovelive handmade models, anime badges, flags and anime image printed T-shirts.

Figure 4.16: Attendees queued to buy the Lovelive anime handmade models, taken on July 22, 2017.



Figure 4.17: A male attendee with anime-badged bag waited in the queue to buy Lovelive anime handmade models, taken on July 22, 2017.



(iv) Finding Four: Attendees' Participation of Cosplaying

The last finding is that many attendees wore anime costumes and cosplayed anime characters. When walking around the activity area, I found many cosplayers. The attendee put on anime costumes, posed similar facial expressions and gestured as the anime characters in anime, comics and games. There were volunteer cosplayers and staff cosplayers at Bilibili World 2017. While the staff cosplayers always had a sign of “staff” on their back, the volunteer cosplayers did not.

The photos of volunteer cosplayers showed the attendees' imaginations and understandings of anime characters. Cosplaying is a behaviour containing the narratives of people who want to present anime characters in the real world, and it enables people to reflect their imaginations of anime characters regardless of the assumed gender (Lamerichs, 2011; Nichols, 2019). Some attendees of Bilibili World 2017 practised this and presented anime characters in their ways. For example, Figure 4.18 shows a female volunteer cosplayer, who cosplayed a female character called D.VA from the game *Overwatch*. She held a toy rifle in her right hand and a fan in her left hand and posed when I took a photo of her after having her permission. Figure 4.19 shows two volunteer cosplayers were posing. They cosplayed the male anime character Sakata Gintoki from the Japanese animation *Gintama*. They wore white hairpieces and black dresses and held wooden swords in hands. One volunteer cosplayer stood, and the other bent one of her knees on the ground. Figure 4.20 shows a costumed attendee, who was wearing a purple dress and holding a laced purple umbrella, passed by me when I was walking around in the activity area. Figure 4.21 shows two costumed attendees posed for other attendees to take photos, with putting aside their belongings. The costumed attendee at the left side wore a blue dress and a pair of blue wings and held a white ribbon on her right hand, and the other costumed attendee wore an orange hairpiece and a golden dress with her left hand holding a part of her laced veil. Figure 4.22 takes a moment when two costumed attendees, who wore hairpieces and dresses, were at rest in the activity area.

Figure 4.18: A volunteer attendee cosplayed a female character of the game *Overwatch*, taken on July 22, 2017.



Figure 4.19: Two volunteer cosplayers cosplayed the male anime character Sakata Gintoki of the Japanese animation *Gintama*, and they posed for other attendees to take photos, taken on July 22, 2017.



Figure 4.20: A volunteer cosplayer walked around with holding a purple umbrella in her hands in the activity area of Bilibili World 2017, taken on July 22, 2017.



Figure 4.21: Two voluntary cosplayers posed for attendees to take photos, taken on July 22, 2017.



Figure 4.22: Two costumed attendees chatted and rested in the activity area, taken on July 22, 2017.



Some volunteer cosplayers made changes on their costumes to present their narratives of anime characters. For example, in Figure 4.18, the volunteer attendee, who cosplayed D.VA, wore a blue and pink dress with the make-up of D.VA. D.VA's outfit in *Overwatch* is not a dress but a blue and white jumpsuit as Figure 4.23 displays (Blizzard, 2019). A similar change of costumes also can be found in Figure 4.19. Figure 4.19 displays the two female volunteer cosplayers cosplayed the male anime character Sakata Gintoki from *Gintama*. They cosplayed Sakata Gintoki by wearing dresses instead of a black jumpsuit and a white robe that showed in *Gintama*, as Figure 4.24 shows. These changes showed that the costumes were not so important in attendees' cosplay at Bilibili World 2017 as in the traditional cosplaying behaviour where costumes help to recall the characteristics and storylines of the anime characters and compensate for the absence of story (Azuma, 2012).

Figure 4.23: The image of D.VA in the online multiplayer game *Overwatch*. Available at: <https://playoverwatch.com/en-us/heroes/dva/> (Accessed: 16 March, 2019).



Figure 4.24: The poster of Japanese animation *Gintama*. In this poster, Sakata Gintoki, who is in the black jumpsuit and white robe, holds a wooden sword and stands in the middle. Available at: <https://www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/gintama/> (Accessed: 16 March, 2019).



4.3 Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter introduced Bilibili World 2017 and explained the findings of Bilibili online community and Bilibili's users. Bilibili World 2017, overall, was a cluster of Bilibili users showing anime and cosplaying preferences in the real world within Bilibili's commercial promotions. On the one hand, Bilibili promoted its online community culture and business partners. On the other hand, the

attendees practised consumption on entertaining products, such as the handmade models of Lovelive female group, and they were also not shy to show express their ACG preference through cosplaying, which both showed the strong preferences of attendees in ACG as that shown in Bilibili live stream channels.

The observation on Bilibili users' offline participation at Bilibili World 2017 contributed to understanding Bilibili users and Bilibili online community. Bilibili World 2017 was the first and the only Bilibili's offline exhibition that I have attended during the period of conducting participant observations on Bilibili live stream channels. It was unavoidable for me to make a comparison between the findings of online live stream channels and that of Bilibili World 2017. In online live stream channels, the users put effort into forming small communities. As Chapter Two and Chapter Three explained, many live streamers endeavoured in attracting viewers as more as possible to have income, and viewers show their strong support to live streamers by virtual gifting and against trolling. Compared with this community spirit presented in live stream channels, however, community spirit was absent at Bilibili World 2017. The attendees were scattered and had less communication with others. They had rest and took photos at the promotion area, and they wandered between the stages in the activity area. The diverse performance stages distracted the attention of attendees, and attendees with same interest were not given a chance by Bilibili to discuss their interests. Small communities like those presented in live stream channels, therefore, could not quickly form on Bilibili World 2017. The Conclusion will draw all understandings of users' participation in Bilibili online community and at Bilibili World 2017 within broader contexts. It will also combine all findings and claims together with the existing literature in the study of global online community and Chinese Internet and society. The Conclusion will display the contribution of this thesis to the studies of Chinese Internet and society and global online community.

Conclusion: Bilibili Online Community in Broader Contexts

This thesis is an ethnographic effort aiming to deconstruct a burgeoning Chinese online community, the Bilibili online community, by understanding users' participation in Bilibili live stream channels. This online community has become widely known by Chinese Internet users for its anime, comics and games (ACG) videos and live streams. Bilibili does not only provide users with multiple forms of entertainment content include and beyond the ACG but also encourages users to create user-generated content. Live streams are the popular user-generated content because they display users' tastes of content, the creativity of performances and the participation in video-mediated communicating.

This thesis has sought to explain the mobility of Chinese Internet users in building community spirit in Bilibili live stream channels. The existing studies of Bilibili focus on introducing Bilibili's bullet comment technology, the using of image phrases and its constitution of young users. They do not touch on how the users are mobilised in constructing community on Bilibili, especially when Bilibili is expanding the business by providing live streaming service. The study on Bilibili users' mobility of constructing online community is associated with the elements that lead Internet users in generating the sense of community in the online world (Koh and Kim, 2004; Chiu, Hsu, and Wang, 2006; Dijck, 2013; Lee and Suh, 2015). It is this new work on understanding Chinese Internet users' mobility that this thesis contributes to.

The Bilibili site and the Chinese government influenced the construction of this online community, for example, Bilibili's site architecture and the Chinese government's regulation of the circulation of information. All three actors of the user, Bilibili site and the Chinese government in the building of Bilibili online community cannot be neglected. This is the key to understand how an online community develops within the Chinese social context. Therefore, to discuss the Bilibili online community in a broader context, the conclusion will be drawn from two aspects. One is to understand the Bilibili online community in the study of global online communities, and the

other is to analyse Bilibili online community in the study of Chinese Internet and society.

I. Bilibili in the Study of Global Online Communities

The study of online communities started since the late twentieth century with the wide use of Internet technology in computer-mediated communication, such as email groups, chat-rooms and bullet board services. Recently, with the spread of web 2.0, the scholarship has been discussing Internet users' participation on different sites, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. These studies examined Internet users' mobility in disseminating information and establishing an online connection in a global extent from different aspects. These studies provide a general scope of understanding the practice of users and the growing leading role of the site in constructing an online community on a global extent.

(i) Users' participation

Users' practice on the Internet is no more a form of fan activity where members share strong interests in one particular existing text, such as a fiction, a literature book, a television programme or a film. It generates more original content for other members to read or comment. It gradually becomes a participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006a; Jenkins, 2016). Users' participation can be found in peers' reviews on online shopping site, online fan fiction writing site and online dating site (Clemons, 2009; Black, 2009; Kang and Hoffman, 2011; Eng, 2012). Preece, Nonnecke and Andrews (2004) found that the active members make the majority of content for the community and the passive members take advantage of existing benefits without contributing to the community. Abfalter, Zaglia and Mueller (2012) also supported by claiming that the smaller group of active members invested into the general functioning of the community. These findings noticed the different contribution of users and provided a start of understanding the different participation of users.

This thesis contributes to the understanding of users' different participation by claiming that there are two divides between users. Users are identified by contribution. After examining users participate in Bilibili's live stream channels, this thesis found that one divide exists between live streamers and viewers. As Chapter Two analysed, live streamers play the leading role in channels, because they are the persons making performances for viewers to watch and comment. They are the "smaller group of active members" that Abfalter, Zaglia and Mueller called who actively investing in the majority content for the community. Their self-branding strengthens the leading role of live streamers. As Chapter Two displayed, live streamers usually practice in two self-branding strategies, the text strategy and the performing strategy. The text strategy is to put self-introduction, personal tags or a text of persuading viewers to subscribe to the channel or to follow on other social media. The performing strategy makes up the limitation of text strategy when the information that live streamers provide is implicit. No matter the text strategy or the performing strategy, the effect is the same. That is, viewers gather around live streamers and help live streamers to increase the popularity of live streamers. In this case, the divide between live streamers and viewers will become more prominent. Live streamers actively invest in more content generating, while viewers become the members of the community who passively receive the content that has been created by live streamers.

The other divide between users that this thesis found is the classification of insiders and outsiders. The boundary between insiders and outsiders has been redefined. The insiders or experts are no longer only defined by their contribution to the community but by how often they log in to the sites, how active they create content and how they familiar with the community rules (Abfalter, Zaglia and Mueller, 2012; Dennen, 2014). It is easy to find that, in addition to the contribution, the frequency of logging in and the familiarity of community rules are also the criteria of identifying whether a user is an insider or not. These criteria help to build a community spirit, in which the emotional safety to a group and the identification with other group members are strengthened (Rosenbaum, Ostrom and Kuntze, 2005). The

outsiders are the group of users who break community rules and have fun from making annoying comments in the community, for example, the trolls “whose main purpose is to disrupt and annoy” (Binns, 2012, p. 547; Buckel, Trapnell and Paulhus, 2014;). This thesis confirmed this classification by proposing that barrage etiquette is the boundary of classifying insiders and outsiders in the Bilibili online community. An insider of Bilibili online community is the user who follows barrage etiquette, respects live streamers’ performance and keeps polite to other users. Like other online communities, such as the magazines online communities that Binns (2012) found and the feminist community that Herring, Job-Sluder, Scheckeler and Barab (2011) found, the insider of Bilibili also avoid making rude comments on live streamers and other users in live stream channels. This thesis, therefore, claims that a possible trend will develop from the boundary between insiders and outsiders. That is any community rules like Bilibili’s barrage etiquette, may train and convene more insiders to oppose to the outsiders, and as a result, the number of outsiders will become less in an online community.

This thesis also contributes to the study of users’ participation by discovering a hierarchy between viewers. As Chapter Three discussed, viewers were classified into the three groups of passers-by, subscribers and on-board subscribers. In this hierarchy, on-board subscribers stay at the top, other subscribers in the middle, and passers-by at the bottom. On-board subscribers and other subscribers attain the priorities of recommending performance and competing for channel administrators to manage the channels. On-board subscribers even attain more attention from live streamers. This hierarchy develops from Bilibili’s Big Voyage gift system, in which viewers can contribute to the income of live streamers. This hierarchy classifies the viewers into the ones who make a contribution and who do not. This intervention of the site architecture will pull the viewers, who make a contribution to the income of live streamers, closer to live streamers and push the other viewers, who do not contribute, away from live streamers. This finding confirms the increasing influence of the sites on constructing online communities.

(ii) The impacts of site architecture

From the two divides of users and the hierarchy of viewers, it is easy to find that users are active in investing content their participation is complex. This is because Web 2.0 transfers the role of Internet users. “Web 2.0 is the becoming-social of the Web” and enables Internet users both create and receive information and content (Han, 2011, p. 3). Users become more social than ever. However, the sites lead the increasing sociality of users and are increasingly involved in users’ online participation and even the formation of community spirit, which is the other important result of Web 2.0.

The sites have revenue by encouraging users to create more content. Algorithms, bots and other architectural measures are developed and used to record and predict users’ preferences and content tastes. This has developed further from the convergence culture that Jenkins (2006) believed users could search new information and set up the connection among dispersed media content on one device. The sites are becoming the “device” that users can search for new information and set up the connection. They take the benefits of users’ participation by deploying the content that the existing users have created to attract new users. Whether users are “experts” is not important. The issue that matters is the number of users. The more users are attracted to stay on the sites, the more content that users create the sites can take benefits. This is the advantage that the high number of users brings to Youtube, Twitter, Bilibili and other sites. As a result, the impacts of the sites on attracting and retaining users by site architecture are increasing.

The capitalism’s investing on the sites makes the construction of the online community no longer a volunteer activity of a small group of Internet users who assert they are “experts” on particular content. More users flooded into the Internet and participate in the sites. They do not have to become the “experts” and claim they know very well about the issue or topics that they are contributing to. As long as they want, they can make a voice on any issues or topics. The sites also encourage more users to join their sites and create content. To produce income and profits, sites like YouTube and Twitter must leverage the creativity and connectivity of online community members

(Burgess and Green, 2009). This is a co-experience of communication that demonstrated the influence of site's commercialization on the construction of the online community. Users strengthened their acknowledgement to community rules, community boundary and community spirit, and the sites make money from this acknowledgement (Koh and Kim, 2004; Koh, Butler and Bock, 2007; Dijck, 2013).

Bilibili is no exception. The expanding business, the investments that Bilibili has attracted, and the success of Bilibili listing in the NASDAQ Stock Exchange, together imply that Bilibili is no longer the small site circulating ACG for ACG fans. Bilibili has to earn income and take responsibility for their shareholders. Users' creativity and connectivity, therefore, become the source of revenue. This is obvious in live stream channels. As this thesis found, the performance of live streamers help Bilibili attract more users to watch live streams, and the gifting behaviour of users brings income for Bilibili. Each strategy of self-branding that live streamers took would create income and bring a certain number of new subscriptions to live streamers. The gifting and commenting of viewers, especially the subscribers, strengthened their acknowledgement to community rules, community boundary and community spirit. What Bilibili does is to encourage more users to keep active in live streaming by rewarding live streamers with the commission and making live stream channels competitive by putting a flexible leaderboard.

The site architecture is important in building an online community. The varying characteristics of social media make users tend to use these social media in varying ways. For instance, Facebook users are more willing to share identifying profiles because the connection between users is established on users' contacts in the real world (Dwyer, Hiltz, and Passerini, 2007). YouTube users are more skilful than Facebook and Twitter users in self-branding (Smith, Fischer, and Yongjian, 2012). These differences in site architecture decide how they are different from each other. "The range of available design features and functionalities, the ways specific features are constructed, and how they are combined into a more or less coherent site for social communications" draw "the presence and absence of specific features

and functionalities”, all of which constitute the overall distinctive architecture of a site (Su, Lee and Lin, 2016, p. 2).

Bilibili also tries to draw its differences. For example, the bullet comment technology in live stream channels. It is different from the way that live streams presented on other live streaming sites. For example, on the gaming live streaming site Twitch, viewers’ comments only show up in the chat sidebar and do not cover the streaming media (Hamilton, Garretson and Kerne, 2014). On Bilibili, viewers’ comments show up both in the comment section and the streaming section, which constitute the “amazing synchronic relationship and forms a virtual community-like video watching atmosphere without spatial and temporal restrictions” that Bilibili highly praised (Bilibili, 2018e). It also makes Bilibili different from other Chinese video sharing sites, such as IQIYI (爱奇艺, aiqiyi) and YOUKU (优酷, youku), even if bullet comments weaken the anticipation of viewers to fully understand the content of videos and live streams (Wang, 2013; Song and Ma, 2015). This thesis also found the Big Voyage gift system is another site architecture that Bilibili deployed to influence the community building, especially in creating a group of users who would like to contribute to the income of live streamers. This is an important way that Bilibili was having revenue from users’ practising consumption on entertainment content (Bilibili, 2018e). In return, users who purchase the membership of Big Voyage gift system will be listed at the top of the comment section in the live stream channel until the membership ends. This is creating the hierarchy between viewers as Chapter Three discussed. The Big Voyage gift system will help Bilibili in the future classify the users who are affordable of the Big Voyage membership and who are not, and Bilibili will use this classification to target different users by sending different content and advertisement to “persuade” users to practise more consumption on Bilibili.

Bilibili is one of the global online communities. Deconstructing Bilibili under the context of global communities is to find the common characteristics that Bilibili shares with other online communities. The findings of this thesis examined the diversity of users’ participation and the increasing impacts of

the site on the community building. Even in the live stream channels, the essence of users' participation is still communicating and sharing, which has not changed since the rediscovery of community on the Internet in the late twentieth century as discussed in Introduction. The most significant change that Web 2.0 brings is the involvement of sites in users' participation. The sites have revenue from users' creativity and connectivity, and there is no doubt for the sites to attract and attain users by building site architecture with algorithms, bots and other architectural measures. As a result, the online community is no longer developed by the voluntary contributions and participation of users, but developed under the leadership of the site. This is how Bilibili developed.

II. Bilibili Online Community Shows the Mobility of Chinese Internet Users in Practising Consumption on Entertainment Content

Examining the Bilibili online community under the local context is also needed. This is where this thesis found its inspiration. In the context of Chinese society, Bilibili users' practising consumption on entertainment content that this thesis found will provide a new understanding of analysing the mobility of Chinese Internet users with the developing Internet and Communication Technology (ICT). In this mobility, users and the site are under the surveillance and regulation of Chinese government, which is "to protect this (live streaming) industry for its future development under the state's policy" (CNNIC, 2017). It means, the typical discussion on the actors of user, site and government in deconstructing a Chinese online community still works. Therefore, discussing the Bilibili online community under this Chinese specific context is also needed.

(i) The mobility of users in practicing consumption on entertainment content

This thesis has sought to explain the mobility of Chinese Internet users in practising consumption on entertainment content, which builds on the community spirit in Bilibili live stream channels. The existing studies of Bilibili focus on introducing the bullet comment technology, the use of image phrases, and the constitution of young users. They do not touch on how users are

mobilised in constructing community on Bilibili, especially when Bilibili is expanding the business by providing live streaming service and more other entertaining content. The study of Bilibili users' mobility in constructing online community is associated with the elements that guide Internet users in generating the sense of community in the online world (Koh and Kim, 2004; Chiu, Hsu, and Wang, 2006; Dijck, 2013; Lee and Suh, 2015). The popularity of ACG on Bilibili, the users' acknowledgement of cuteness in Bilibili's live stream channels, and the cosplaying of attendees at Bilibili World 2017 all show the mobility of Bilibili users in practising consumption on entertainment content. The Big Voyage online membership and the handmade models at offline Bilibili World 2017, moreover, show the ability of Bilibili users in paying for their ACG interests.

This collective mobility of Chinese Internet users on entertaining and sharing interests is different from the liberating power for the development of democracy within the modernization of Chinese ICT. Live stream channels are the new online public place that Chinese Internet users gather and construct online communities with similar interests in entertainment content. They share interests, build community and spend time in maintaining the community. ACG and anime element were still prevalent on Bilibili. Anime and other symbolic elements of Bilibili demonstrated that Bilibili is an apparatus of various users' participation and creativity rather than a tool to be used to push forward the civic movements. This essence of Bilibili decides the way of users using live streams on Bilibili.

(ii) Promote or regulate: the role of the Chinese government

The mobility of Chinese Internet users in practising consumption on entertaining content is under the influence of the Chinese government. The Chinese government was described by previous research as the role of surveillance, which regulates the provision of information of sites and users since Chinese ICT developed in the 1990s. The action of "The Great Firewall", the regulations on the Internet café and the other measures taken in the information control and surveillance were concluded by the scholarship as the measures to "create a uniform, well-behaved culture that will not make waves"

(Dowell, 2006, p. 114; see Chase and Mulvenon, 2002; Dowell, 2006; Zheng, 2009). However, this thesis found that the role of the Chinese government played on the Chinese Internet is complex. More than regulating, the Chinese government also promotes the development of sites like Bilibili. This will contribute to the understanding of the role of the Chinese government in the study of Chinese Internet and society.

On the one hand, the Chinese government facilitated the online mobility of Bilibili users in practising consumption on entertainment content. The evidence provided in Chapter One suggests that Bilibili developed from the fast developing Chinese live streaming industry and Chinese domestic ACG industry, both of which were supported by the Chinese government. The strategy of “Broadband China” that outlined by General Office of the State Council in 2013 lowered the cost of Chinese citizen accessing the Internet, and the spread of third-party online payment and mobile payment that allowed by the state-owned bank in 2010 gave the path to the rise of convenient online gifting. These facilitated the widespread of Chinese live streaming sites and, up to 2018, more than 200 live streaming sites have been competing for users including Bilibili. Bilibili is not the most famous one but is the one distinct for its ACG content. Its rise was also in the trend of Chinese government’s supporting domestic ACG industry to “compatible with the growing spiritual and cultural needs of people” and “compatible with the strong market demand” to promote the growth of the economy (General Office of State Council, 2006). Therefore, it is no doubt that the Chinese government has played an essential role in the development of Chinese live streaming sites and ACG industry.

On the other hand, the typical image of the Chinese government in regulating the sites’ and users’ provision of information has not changed. This thesis found that the Chinese government is still strict in the surveillance on the circulation of information. This surveillance is to guarantee the live streaming sites will not step over the “line” that the state sets in the Regulation on Internet Information Service of the Republic People of China, and prevent the spread of pornography, violence, money-worship, over-

entertaining, and other “bad contents” and “pessimistic phenomena” (the State Council, 2004). The control and surveillance of the Chinese government are practised through having censorship and anti-porn campaign on the existed information and through outlining regulations on defining what information the sites, including the live streaming sites, could not provide, as Chapter One explained. This evidence suggests that such strict surveillance of Chinese government on live streaming sites’ provision of information is leading the fast development of Chinese live streaming industry to become an issue promoting economic growth instead of producing problems to the society. To this extent, the antagonist relationship between Chinese Internet users and the Chinese government that suggested by previous research of Chase and Mulvenon (2002), Zheng (2009) and Dowell (2006), is hard to find on the live streaming sites like Bilibili. The use of live streams in sharing information during civic engagements that examined by Thorburn (2014) is also hard to find on Bilibili. This is because most live streams on Bilibili are for entertaining, as introduced in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, and are not for making public opinions on politics-related topics, which used to be admitted as sensitive on the Chinese Internet. The state council’s Regulation on Internet Information Service of the Republic People of China also restricts the circulation of information on live streaming sites, and the state may punish the sites, which violate this regulation and disseminate the information that may damage the state’s security. The sites, therefore, pay attention to monitor the content of live streams and guarantee the sites will not step across the “line” that the state sets.

III. Last Words

This thesis is a start of fully understanding the participation of Chinese Internet users in live stream channels on the Chinese site Bilibili. It provided an accurate perception of how Bilibili users participating in the Bilibili online community under the development of Chinese Information and Communication Technologies. It is an ethnographic example of understanding young Chinese Internet users in the study of global online communities. This thesis is also an ethnographic case of understanding Chinese Internet users’

mobility in practising consumption on entertainment content. The evidence presented in this thesis also applies on other Chinese sites and other global sites. The more profound understanding of the sites' leading role in managing and maintaining the Bilibili online community needs more investigations in the future. In addition to the possible future study on the Bilibili online community and in order to more rigorously explore Chinese online community and Chinese Internet users' activities, more specific cases on different sites are needed. This thesis has touched on the influences of three actors of the Internet users, the site and the Chinese government on the online community. More examinations on the interactive-functioning of these three important actors are needed in the future. This will help understand the complexity of the Chinese online community and Chinese Internet users' activities, which further contributes to understanding the Chinese online community in the global communities.

Appendixes

Appendix A: List of twelve live streamers

To protect the privacy of live streamers, this thesis will make them anonymous. The ethnographic study, which does participant observation without interviewing or intimate contact in a public space, does not have to communicate research aims with every individual who has been observed, but this ethnographic study still needs to protect the privacy of these individuals in the ethnographic descriptions (Spradley, 1980, p. 23). Without interviewing or intimate contact, this thesis is to conduct participant observation on live streamers and viewers. Compared to the viewers, live streamers are more likely to expose more personal details. Thus this thesis will always anonymise the live streamers' user name, to protect the live streamers from possible harm.

ID	Username	Channel Address
LS 1	娇羞的蘑菇 (Shy Mushroom)	https://live.bilibili.com/592
LS 2	澜汐(lanxi SAMA)	https://live.bilibili.com/526816
LS 3	乌拉の帝国 (Wula's Empire)	https://live.bilibili.com/1138
LS 4	SUYI 喝奶奶(SUYI Drinks Milk)	https://live.bilibili.com/359
LS 5	yoyo 鼠 (Yoyo Mouse)	https://live.bilibili.com/237
LS 6	库特菌(Kutejun)	https://live.bilibili.com/5148
LS 7	小巫酱(Little Wizard)	https://live.bilibili.com/549
LS 8	吉阿星 (Ji AXing)	https://live.bilibili.com/421
LS 9	比比比比目鱼(Flat Fish)	https://live.bilibili.com/455
LS 10	抽风的小婊 (Crazy Hua)	https://live.bilibili.com/184
LS 11	铃樵 (linghua)	https://live.bilibili.com/244
LS 12	坂本叔 (Uncle Banben)	https://live.bilibili.com/1000

Appendix 1.1: Translation on Rui Chen's concept of managing Bilibili

"Bilibili provides an open and fair stage for users, who have personal interests and hobbies, and Bilibili is also a community, which makes users happy, and embraces various voices and hobbies as possible as this community can."

B 站就是给创作者提供一个开放的、公平的舞台,给所有拥有自己兴趣爱好的人提供一个能够让他们快乐,并且能够尽量包容各种不同爱好和声音的社区。

Appendix 1.2: Original sentences in Chinese of Hibernate Moon's column

B 站在我的印象里,就像是一个奇幻的世界,拥有多种多样的精彩...那次我和朋友躺在床上,看见它在用手机看一部动漫...当时我就被里面的情节和画面给吸引住了,直到我看完了前几集,心中还念念不忘,对于那时候的我来说,这是一种从未有过的新奇体验。等我后面回头问它是用什么看这个(动漫)的,它告诉我说,这个叫做 bilibili,B 站...什么是 B 站?bilibili 是什么鬼?没听说过呀...然后他又给我看了几个视频...唯一记得清的是那只鬼畜的,发出奇怪尖叫的仓鼠。也就是 B 站的鬼畜元素之一。后面我也下载了 bilibili 的手机端。结果进去就跟中了毒一样。我想告诉大家让我中毒的不是动漫,而是在音乐区,我听到的第一首初音的歌。然后我抱着手机,刷了一整天的 B 站。◉▽◉...我突然好奇 B 站有没有其它更有趣的东西,再然后我看到了鬼畜,接着我像疯了一样抽笑了一整天...但是现在想起来还是觉得挺搞笑的,up 主真是一个人才...我实话说,我刚进 B 站那会,我连弹幕都不知道是什么意思呢。后面看见有人在某视频的弹幕里发了句:‘大家弹幕刷起来’接下来一片密密麻麻的弹幕将我的眼睛砸的晕乎乎的,于是在这件事的冲击之勉强知道了弹幕的概念。真的是‘弹幕’◉ω◉后面有人发了句‘别刷了,小心被举报’,于是我怀着好奇的心理点进了小黑屋...小黑屋里面个个都是人才,说话又奇怪,我超喜欢在里面看到他们被抓的感觉~~☆☆大晚上的我就不睡觉,就是要看看被举报的人说了些什么好玩的...了解得越多,也就对 B 站有了种深深的眷恋...B 站的大家,都好像是真正的朋友一样,即使隔着网络,但始终有条线牵住每一个人,心连着心,我一直清楚,是 B 站,缔结了我们和大家直接的纽带。那是属于我们的一个圈子。

Appendix 1.3: Translation on the trash content in Bilibili's Community Rules

Trash content: unrelated names, meaningless sentence or symbol, meaningless time prompts, the names of other TV anime, inane teasing, noncritical taunt towards different opinion, adding unrelated tags, adding

spoiler tags about the video content, and adding advertisement, pornography, quarrel-inducing, and politics related tags

垃圾内容：无关人名/无意义语句、符号/无意义时间/番剧中刷其它番剧/恶俗空耳/针对不同观点的对象无脑嘲讽/添加与视频内容无关的标签/添加剧透视频内容的标签/添加广告、色情、引战、政治相关内容标签/删除他人视频正确的标签。

Appendix 1.4: Nine types of forbidden information in Regulation on Internet Information Service of the Republic People of China (互联网信息服务管理办法, hulianwang xinxi fuwu guanli banfa), published by Chinese State Council on September 20, 2000:

“Any information or content that against the fundamental principles established by the Constitution laws; that endangers the nation’s security, divulges state secrets, subverts the regime, and undermines national unity; that damages the nation’s honour and interests; that invokes national hatred, ethnic discrimination, and undermines the nation’s unity; that destroys the nation’s religious policy, promotes cults, and feudal superstitions; that spread rumours, disrupts social order, and undermines social stability; that spread obscenity (淫秽, yinhui), pornography, gambling, violence, murder, terror or abetting; that insults or slanders others, infringes the legitimate rights and interests of others; and other content prohibited by laws and administrative regulations”

第十五条 互联网信息服务提供者不得制作、复制、发布、传播含有下列内容的信息：

- （一）反对宪法所确定的基本原则的；
- （二）危害国家安全，泄露国家秘密，颠覆国家政权，破坏国家统一的；
- （三）损害国家荣誉和利益的；
- （四）煽动民族仇恨、民族歧视，破坏民族团结的；
- （五）破坏国家宗教政策，宣扬邪教和封建迷信的；
- （六）散布谣言，扰乱社会秩序，破坏社会稳定的；
- （七）散布淫秽、色情、赌博、暴力、凶杀、恐怖或者教唆犯罪的；
- （八）侮辱或者诽谤他人，侵害他人合法权益的；
- （九）含有法律、行政法规禁止的其他内容的。

Appendix 3.1: Bilibili's User Level Plan, published on October 23, 2015.

User Level Programme (用户等级方案)		
User Level (用户等级)	Total Points of Experience (总经验)	Points of Experience Value Needed to Upgrade (升级所需经验)
1	100,000	100,000
2	200,000	100,000
3	300,000	100,000
4	400,000	100,000
5	500,000	100,000
6	600,000	100,000
7	700,000	100,000
8	800,000	100,000
9	900,000	100,000
10	1,000,000	100,000
11	1,800,000	800,000
12	2,600,000	800,000
13	3,400,000	800,000
14	4,200,000	800,000
15	5,000,000	800,000
16	6,000,000	1,000,000
17	7,000,000	1,000,000
18	8,000,000	1,000,000
19	9,000,000	1,000,000
20	10,000,000	1,000,000
21	18,000,000	8,000,000
22	26,000,000	8,000,000
23	34,000,000	8,000,000
24	42,000,000	8,000,000
25	50,000,000	8,000,000
26	60,000,000	10,000,000

27	70,000,000	10,000,000
28	80,000,000	10,000,000
29	90,000,000	10,000,000
30	100,000,000	10,000,000
31	110,000,000	10,000,000
32	120,000,000	10,000,000
33	130,000,000	10,000,000
34	140,000,000	10,000,000
35	150,000,000	10,000,000
36	180,000,000	30,000,000
37	210,000,000	30,000,000
38	240,000,000	30,000,000
39	270,000,000	30,000,000
40	300,000,000	30,000,000
41	340,000,000	40,000,000
42	380,000,000	40,000,000
43	420,000,000	40,000,000
44	460,000,000	40,000,000
45	500,000,000	40,000,000
46	550,000,000	50,000,000
47	600,000,000	50,000,000
48	700,000,000	100,000,000
49	800,000,000	100,000,000
50	1,000,000,000	200,000,000
51	1,200,000,000	200,000,000
52	1,400,000,000	200,000,000
53	1,600,000,000	200,000,000
54	1,800,000,000	200,000,000
55	2,000,000,000	200,000,000
56	2,200,000,000	200,000,000
57	2,400,000,000	200,000,000
58	2,600,000,000	200,000,000

59	2,800,000,000	200,000,000
60	3,000,000,000	200,000,000

Appendix 3.2: Cyberspace Administration of China restricts on live streaming sites' identification.

“Live streaming sites must verify live streamers' identification, hand on the copies of live streamers' identification information to local Internet Information Office, and provide these copies when relevant law enforcement departments inquire according to the laws.”

互联网直播服务提供者应当对互联网直播发布者的真实身份信息进行审核，向所在地省、自治区、直辖市互联网信息办公室分类备案，并在相关执法部门依法查询时予以提供。

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